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THORNTON EDITION

Novels

OF THE

Sisters Brontë

EDITED BY

TEMPLE SCOTT

VILLETTE

By Charlotte Brontë

ILLUSTRATED

VOL. I

Edinburgh

JOHN GRANT

MCMV

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NOTE

"VILLETTE" was first published in 1853—on January 28th. In a letter to Miss Wooler, dated January 27th, 1853, Charlotte Brontë wrote: "*Villette* is to be published to-morrow. Its appearance has been purposely delayed hitherto, to avoid discourteous clashing with Mrs. Gaskell's new work." The story was received, as its writer's friend and biographer tells us, "with one burst of acclamation"; but the laudatory notices only served to make the author's heart "swell with thankfulness to Him who takes note both of suffering, and work, and motives." But it seemed fated that each of her books should bring with it some jar in friendship or some disappointment in expectation. "Jane Eyre" was the centre of a very vortex of discussion; "Shirley" touched for its writer the weakness in George Henry Lewes's character; and now "Villette" brought forth a review in the *Daily News* which disappointed her in Harriet Martineau. The disappointment was not at the criticism, as such—that Charlotte Brontë valued always for the truth it contained; but it was a disappointment born of the unjust charge which Miss Martineau made. "Jane Eyre" had already been censured for its "coarse-

ness," and Miss Martineau found the same fault with "Villette." She liked neither the kind nor the degree of love which pervaded the book, and she told Charlotte Brontë of her dislike both in letter and in review, in straightforward terms. This re-statement of a criticism which she tried to treat with contempt, and for the justice of which she found no foundation in any motive in herself, coming as it did from Miss Martineau, hurt her deeply. Nowadays, readers of either "Jane Eyre" or "Villette" will wonder wherein the "coarseness" lies; but novel readers of the "fifties" and "sixties" had not yet been taught, by women and others, to associate the flower Love with its root sexual passion. Not that Charlotte Brontë ever consciously or even unconsciously did this; but her limited experience of the world and man—particularly her knowledge of her brother's broken life—coupled with her inborn love for truth as she saw it, forced her to write as she did. "Coarseness" was altogether the wrong word with which to characterize this quality in her writings. She resented it, and naturally so; since every impulse of her pure soul tended to transfigure all the harsh concretes of life which she saw spiritually, and as emanations from the Divine. For this reason also, we must demur to Mrs. Gaskell's apology, and her attempt to explain away this same "coarseness" which she also found in her friend's writings.

The material for "Villette" was gathered during Charlotte Brontë's visits, as pupil and teacher, to the city of Brussels. Readers of Mrs. Gaskell's "Life" and of Mr. Clement K. Shorter's "Charlotte Brontë and her Circle" will find in those books the story of these visits. A kind

aunt—Miss Branwell—had agreed to help towards the expenses for giving Charlotte and Emily the advantages of a continental "finish," and the benefits of foreign travel. The place first decided on was Lille; but friendly inquiries resulted in the two sisters going to Brussels—to the Pensionnat of Madame Héger. If we desire to know the life at this Pensionnat we need but to read the account of Madame Beck's institution in the Rue Fossette of "Villette" as given by Lucy Snowe—it is accurate in every detail even. The Pensionnat Héger of the Rue d'Isabelle in Brussels had the same dormitories, the same schoolrooms and classes, the same *allée defendue*, the same mistress, the same professor, and even the original of Ginevra Fanshawe, as did the school kept by Madame Beck. The house in the Rue Fossette is the house in the Rue d'Isabelle; Madame Beck with her jealous disposition, her cat-like tread, and her ways of espionage, is Madame Héger; Professor Paul Emanuel is M. Héger himself, and Ginevra Fanshawe is a Miss Maria Miller. Mr. Shorter, in the work already referred to, gives confirmation for all this, from the evidence of a Miss Lætitia Wheelwright, now of Kensington, who was a fellow-pupil with Charlotte and Emily at the Pensionnat Héger. "To Miss Wheelwright and those of her sisters who are still living," says Mr. Shorter, "the descriptions of the Pensionnat Héger which are given in "Villette" and 'The Professor' are perfectly accurate. M. Héger, with his heavy black moustache and his black hair, entering the class-room of an evening to read to his pupils was a sufficiently familiar object, and his keen intelligence amounting almost to genius had affected the Wheelwright girls as forcibly as it had done the Brontës. Madame

Héger, again, for ever peeping from behind doors and through the plate glass partitions which separate the passages from the schoolrooms, was a constant source of irritation to all the English pupils."

In November, 1842, Miss Branwell was dead, but the news of her illness in October had already necessitated a return to Haworth. In January, 1843, however, Charlotte Brontë was again in Brussels, this time without Emily, and as a teacher with a salary of £16 per annum. She remained until the end of the year, returning to Haworth on January 2nd, 1844, with a diploma from M. Héger certifying that Miss Brontë "was perfectly capable of teaching the French language." Many considerations went to bring her back to England, not the least among which was the gradual estrangement between Madame Héger and herself. Round this second Brussels visit much speculation has centred. It has been said that Charlotte Brontë was in love with M. Héger, and that the estrangement with his wife was due to the latter's jealousy. People have thought of Charlotte Brontë and the Professor of the Pensionnat in the Rue d'Isabelle as they thought when they read of Lucy Snowe and Paul Emanuel—they have taken the story of the novel to be the story of her own experience. It is needless almost to say that here, as in most issues of moment, the superficial judgment is false. Mr. Shorter, on evidence which is final, gives an emphatic contradiction to all that has been assumed and deduced on this subject, and we may safely leave the matter where Mr. Shorter has left it.

Those who care to know of the characters in fiction as living persons, may be interested to learn that the original of

NOTE

Dr. John Bretton of "Villette" is the present Mr. George Smith of the firm of Smith, Elder and Co., publishers. He is described as Miss Brontë knew him. Mrs. Bretton is Mr. Smith's mother, Lucy Snowe is Miss Brontë herself, though only in slight points. Originally her name was intended to be Frost; but the name was changed to Snow, and then to Snowe.

TEMPLE SCOTT.

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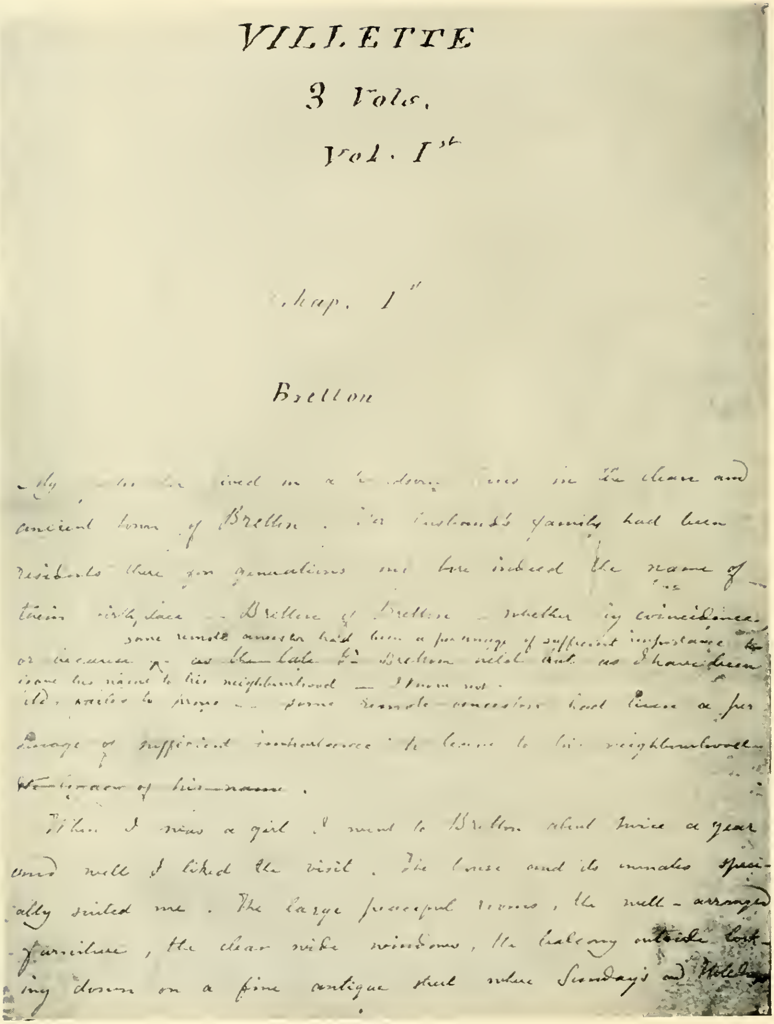

VILLETTE

3 Vols.

Vol. Ist

Chap. 1st

Bretton

My [illegible] lived in a [illegible] house in the clean and ancient town of Bretton. Her husband's family had been residents there for generations and bore indeed the name of their birthplace - Bretton of Bretton - whether by coincidence or because some remote ancestor had been a personage of sufficient importance to leave his name to his neighbourhood — I know not. [illegible]

When I was a girl I went to Bretton about twice a year and well I liked the visit. The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows, the balcony outside looking down on a fine antique street where Sundays and Holidays

FIRST PAGE OF MSS. OF "VILLETTE."

VILLETTE

CHAPTER I.

BRETTON.

My godmother lived in a handsome house in the clean and ancient town of Bretton. Her husband's family had been residents there for generations, and bore, indeed, the name of their birthplace—Bretton of Bretton: whether by coincidence, or because some remote ancestor had been a personage of sufficient importance to leave his name to his neighbourhood, I know not.

When I was a girl I went to Bretton about twice a year, and well I liked the visit. The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large, peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear, wide windows, the balcony outside, looking down on a fine antique street, where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide—so quiet was its atmosphere, so clean its pavement—these things pleased me well.

One child in a household of grown people is

usually made very much of, and in a quiet way I was a good deal taken notice of by Mrs. Bretton, who had been left a widow, with one son, before I knew her; her husband, a physician, having died while she was yet a young and handsome woman.

She was not young, as I remember her, but she was still handsome, tall, well-made, and though dark for an Englishwoman, yet wearing always the clearness of health in her brunette cheek, and its vivacity in a pair of fine, cheerful black eyes. People esteemed it a grievous pity that she had not conferred her complexion on her son, whose eyes were blue—though, even in boyhood, very piercing —and the colour of his long hair such as friends did not venture to specify, except as the sun shone on it, when they called it golden. He inherited the lines of his mother's features, however; also her good teeth, her stature (or the promise of her stature, for he was not yet full-grown), and, what was better, her health without flaw, and her spirits of that tone and equality which are better than a fortune to the possessor.

In the autumn of the year —— I was staying at Bretton; my godmother having come in person to claim me of the kinsfolk with whom was at that time fixed my permanent residence. I believe she then plainly saw events coming, whose very shadow I scarce guessed; yet of which the faint suspicion sufficed to impart unsettled sadness, and made me glad to change scene and society.

Time always flowed smoothly for me at my godmother's side; not with tumultuous swiftness, but blandly, like the gliding of a full river through a plain. My visits to her resembled the sojourn of Christian and Hopeful beside a certain pleasant stream, "with green trees on each bank, and meadows beautified with lilies all the year round." The charm of variety there was not, nor the excitement of incident; but I liked peace so well, and sought stimulus so little, that when the latter came I almost felt it a disturbance, and wished rather it had still held aloof.

One day a letter was received of which the contents evidently caused Mrs. Bretton surprise and some concern. I thought at first it was from home, and trembled, expecting I know not what disastrous communication: to me, however, no reference was made, and the cloud seemed to pass.

The next day, on my return from a long walk, I found, as I entered my bedroom, an unexpected change. In addition to my own French bed in its shady recess, appeared in a corner a small crib, draped with white; and in addition to my mahogany chest of drawers, I saw a tiny rosewood chest. I stood still, gazed, and considered.

"Of what are these things the signs and tokens?" I asked. The answer was obvious. "A second guest is coming: Mrs. Bretton expects other visitors."

On descending to dinner, explanations ensued.

A little girl, I was told, would shortly be my companion: the daughter of a friend and distant relation of the late Dr. Bretton's. This little girl, it was added, had recently lost her mother; though, indeed, Mrs. Bretton ere long subjoined, the loss was not so great as might at first appear. Mrs. Home (Home it seems was the name) had been a very pretty, but a giddy, careless woman, who had neglected her child, and disappointed and disheartened her husband. So far from congenial had the union proved, that separation at last ensued—separation by mutual consent, not after any legal process. Soon after this event, the lady having over-exerted herself at a ball, caught cold, took a fever, and died after a very brief illness. Her husband, naturally a man of very sensitive feelings, and shocked inexpressibly by too sudden communication of the news, could hardly, it seems, now be persuaded but that some over-severity on his part—some deficiency in patience and indulgence—had contributed to hasten her end. He had brooded over this idea till his spirits were seriously affected; the medical men insisted on travelling being tried as a remedy, and meanwhile Mrs. Bretton had offered to take charge of his little girl. "And I hope," added my godmother in conclusion, "the child will not be like her mamma; as silly and frivolous a little flirt as ever sensible man was weak enough to marry. For," said she, "Mr Home *is* a sensible man in his way, though

not very practical : he is fond of science, and lives half his life in a laboratory trying experiments— a thing his butterfly wife could neither comprehend nor endure ; and, indeed," confessed my godmother, "I should not have liked it myself."

In answer to a question of mine, she further informed me that her late husband used to say Mr. Home had derived this scientific turn from a maternal uncle, a French savant: for he came, it seems, of mixed French and Scottish origin, and had connections now living in France, of whom more than one wrote *de* before his name, and called himself noble.

That same evening at nine o'clock, a servant was dispatched to meet the coach by which our little visitor was expected. Mrs. Bretton and I sat alone in the drawing-room waiting her coming ; John Graham Bretton being absent on a visit to one of his schoolfellows who lived in the country. My godmother read the evening paper while she waited ; I sewed. It was a wet night ; the rain lashed the panes, and the wind sounded angry and restless.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Bretton from time to time. "What weather for her journey! I wish she were safe here."

A little before ten the door-bell announced Warren's return. No sooner was the door opened than I ran down into the hall ; there lay a trunk and some band-boxes, beside them stood a person like a nurse-girl, and at the foot of the

staircase was Warren with a shawled bundle in his arms.

"Is that the child?" I asked.

"Yes, miss."

I would have opened the shawl, and tried to get a peep at the face, but it was hastily turned from me to Warren's shoulder.

"Put me down, please," said a small voice when Warren opened the drawing-room door, "and take off this shawl," continued the speaker, extracting with its minute hand the pin, and with a sort of fastidious haste doffing the clumsy wrapping. The creature which now appeared made a deft attempt to fold the shawl; but the drapery was much too heavy and large to be sustained or wielded by those hands and arms. "Give it to Harriet, please," was then the direction, "and she can put it away." This said, it turned and fixed its eyes on Mrs. Bretton.

"Come here, little dear," said that lady. "Come and let me see if you are cold and damp: come and let me warm you at the fire."

The child advanced promptly. Relieved of her wrapping, she appeared exceedingly tiny; but was a neat, completely-fashioned little figure, light, slight, and straight. Seated on my godmother's ample lap, she looked a mere doll; her neck, delicate as wax, her head of silky curls, increased, I thought, the resemblance.

Mrs. Bretton talked in little fond phrases as she

chafed the child's hands, arms, and feet; first she was considered with a wistful gaze, but soon a smile answered her. Mrs. Bretton was not generally a caressing woman: even with her deeply-cherished son, her manner was rarely sentimental, often the reverse; but when the small stranger smiled at her, she kissed it, asking,—

"What is my little one's name?"

"Missy."

"But besides Missy?"

"Polly, papa calls her."

"Will Polly be content to live with me?"

"Not *always;* but till papa comes home. Papa is gone away." She shook her head expressively.

"He will return to Polly, or send for her."

"Will he, ma'am? Do you know he will?"

"I think so."

"But Harriet thinks not: at least, not for a long while. He is ill."

Her eyes filled. She drew her hand from Mrs. Bretton's, and made a movement to leave her lap; it was at first resisted, but she said,—

"Please, I wish to go; I can sit on a stool."

She was allowed to slip down from the knee, and taking a footstool, she carried it to a corner where the shade was deep, and there seated herself. Mrs. Bretton, though a commanding, and in grave matters even a peremptory woman, was often passive in trifles: she allowed the child her way. She said to me, "Take no notice at present."

But I did take notice : I watched Polly rest her small elbow on her small knee, her head on her hand ; I observed her draw a square inch or two of pocket-handkerchief from the doll-pocket of her doll-skirt, and then I heard her weep. Other children in grief or pain cry aloud, without shame or restraint ; but this being wept : the tiniest occasional sniff testified to her emotion. Mrs. Bretton did not hear it : which was quite as well. Ere long, a voice, issuing from the corner, demanded,—

"May the bell be rung for Harriet ?"

I rang ; the nurse was summoned and came.

"Harriet, I must be put to bed," said her little mistress. "You must ask where my bed is."

Harriet signified that she had already made that inquiry.

"Ask if you sleep with me, Harriet."

"No, missy," said the nurse : "you are to share this young lady's room," designating me.

Missy did not leave her seat, but I saw her eyes seek me. After some minutes' silent scrutiny, she emerged from her corner.

"I wish you, ma'am, good-night," said she to Mrs. Bretton ; but she passed me mute.

"Good-night, Polly," I said.

"No need to say good-night, since we sleep in the same chamber," was the reply with which she vanished from the drawing-room. We heard Harriet propose to carry her upstairs. "No need,"

was again her answer—"no need, no need," and her small step toiled wearily up the staircase.

On going to bed an hour afterwards, I found her still wide awake. She had arranged her pillows so as to support her little person in a sitting posture; her hands, placed one within the other, rested quietly on the sheet, with an old-fashioned calm most unchildlike. I abstained from speaking to her for some time, but just before extinguishing the light, I recommended her to lie down.

"By-and-by," was the answer.

"But you will take cold, missy."

She took some tiny article of raiment from the chair at her crib-side, and with it covered her shoulders. I suffered her to do as she pleased. Listening awhile in the darkness, I was aware that she still wept—wept under restraint, quietly and cautiously.

On awaking with daylight, a trickling of water caught my ear. Behold! there she was risen and mounted on a stool near the washstand, with pains and difficulty inclining the ewer (which she could not lift) so as to pour its contents into the basin. It was curious to watch her as she washed and dressed, so small, busy, and noiseless. Evidently she was little accustomed to perform her own toilette; and the buttons, strings, hooks and eyes, offered difficulties which she encountered with a perseverance good to witness. She folded her night-dress, she smoothed the drapery of her couch

quite neatly; withdrawing into a corner, where the sweep of the white curtain concealed her, she became still. I half rose, and advanced my head to see how she was occupied. On her knees, with her forehead bent on her hands, I perceived that she was praying.

Her nurse tapped at the door. She started up.

"I am dressed, Harriet," said she: "I have dressed myself, but I do not feel neat. Make me neat!"

"Why did you dress yourself, missy?"

"Hush, speak low, Harriet, for fear of waking *the girl*" (meaning me, who now lay with my eyes shut). "I dressed myself to learn, against the time you leave me."

"Do you want me to go?"

"When you are cross, I have many a time wanted you to go, but not now. Tie my sash straight; make my hair smooth, please."

"Your sash is straight enough. What a particular little body you are!"

"It must be tied again. Please to tie it."

"There, then. When I am gone you must get that young lady to dress you."

"On no account."

"Why? She is a very nice young lady. I hope you mean to behave prettily to her, missy, and not show your airs."

"She shall dress me on no account."

"Comical little thing!"

"You are not passing the comb straight through my hair, Harriet; the line will be crooked."

"Ay, you are ill to please. Does that suit?"

"Pretty well. Where should I go now that I am dressed?"

"I will take you into the breakfast-room."

"Come, then."

They proceeded to the door. She stopped.

"Oh, Harriet, I wish this was papa's house! I don't know these people."

"Be a good child, missy."

"I am good, but I ache here," putting her hand to her heart, and moaning while she reiterated, "Papa! papa!"

I roused myself and started up, to check this scene while it was yet within bounds.

"Say good-morning to the young lady," dictated Harriet.

She said "Good-morning," and then followed her nurse from the room. Harriet temporarily left that same day, to go to her own friends, who lived in the neighbourhood.

On descending, I found Paulina (the child called herself Polly, but her full name was Paulina Mary) seated at the breakfast-table, by Mrs. Bretton's side; a mug of milk stood before her, a morsel of bread filled her hand, which lay passive on the table-cloth; she was not eating.

"How we shall conciliate this little creature," said Mrs. Bretton to me, "I don't know; she

tastes nothing, and, by her looks, she has not slept."

I expressed my confidence in the effects of time and kindness.

"If she were to take a fancy to anybody in the house, she would soon settle; but not till then," replied Mrs. Bretton.

CHAPTER II.

PAULINA.

Some days elapsed, and it appeared she was not likely to take much of a fancy to anybody in the house. She was not exactly naughty or wilful: she was far from disobedient; but an object less conducive to comfort—to tranquillity even—than she presented, it was scarcely possible to have before one's eyes. She moped: no grown person could have performed that uncheering business better; no furrowed face of adult exile, longing for Europe at Europe's antipodes, ever bore more legibly the signs of home sickness than did her infant visage. She seemed growing old and unearthly. I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an over-heated and discursive imagination; but whenever, opening a room door, I found her seated in a corner alone, her head in her pigmy hand, that room seemed to me not inhabited, but haunted.

And again, when of moonlight nights, on waking, I beheld her figure, white and conspicuous in its night-dress, kneeling upright in bed, and praying

like some Catholic or Methodist enthusiast—some precocious fanatic or untimely saint—I scarcely know what thoughts I had; but they ran risk of being hardly more rational and healthy than that child's mind must have been.

I seldom caught a word of her prayers, for they were whispered low; sometimes, indeed, they were not whispered at all, but put up unuttered; such rare sentences as reached my ear still bore the burden, "Papa! my dear papa!" This, I perceived, was a one-idea'd nature, betraying that monomaniac tendency I have ever thought the most unfortunate with which man or woman can be cursed.

What might have been the end of this fretting, had it continued unchecked, can only be conjectured: it received, however, a sudden turn.

One afternoon, Mrs. Bretton, coaxing her from her usual station in a corner, had lifted her into the window-seat, and, by way of occupying her attention, told her to watch the passengers, and count how many ladies should go down the street in a given time. She had sat listlessly, hardly looking, and not counting, when—my eye being fixed on hers—I witnessed in its iris and pupil a startling transfiguration. These sudden, dangerous natures —*sensitive* as they are called—offer many a curious spectacle to those whom a cooler temperament has secured from participation in their angular vagaries. The fixed and heavy gaze swum, trembled, then glittered in fire; the small, overcast brow cleared;

the trivial and dejected features lit up; the sad countenance vanished, and in its place appeared a sudden eagerness, an intense expectancy.

"It *is!*" were her words.

Like a bird or a shaft, or any other swift thing, she was gone from the room. How she got the house-door open I cannot tell; probably it might be ajar; perhaps Warren was in the way and obeyed her behest, which would be impetuous enough. I—watching calmly from the window—saw her in her black frock and tiny braided apron (to pinafores she had an antipathy), dart half the length of the street; and, as I was on the point of turning, and quietly announcing to Mrs. Bretton that the child was run out mad, and ought instantly to be pursued, I saw her caught up, and wrapt at once from my cool observation, and from the wondering stare of the passengers. A gentleman had done this good turn, and now, covering her with his cloak, advanced to restore her to the house whence he had seen her issue.

I concluded he would leave her in a servant's charge and withdraw; but he entered: having tarried a little while below, he came upstairs.

His reception immediately explained that he was known to Mrs. Bretton. She recognized him; she greeted him, and yet she was fluttered, surprised, taken unawares. Her look and manner were even expostulatory; and in reply to these, rather than her words, he said,—

"I could not help it, madame: I found it impossible to leave the country without seeing with my own eyes how she settled."

"But you will unsettle her."

"I hope not. And how is papa's little Polly?"

This question he addressed to Paulina, as he sat down and placed her gently on the ground before him.

"How is Polly's papa?" was the reply, as she leaned on his knee, and gazed up into his face.

It was not a noisy, not a wordy scene: for that I was thankful; but it was a scene of feeling too brimful, and which, because the cup did not foam up high or furiously overflow, only oppressed one the more. On all occasions of vehement, unrestrained expansion, a sense of disdain or ridicule comes to the weary spectator's relief; whereas I have ever felt most burdensome that sort of sensibility which bends of its own will, a giant slave under the sway of good sense.

Mr. Home was a stern-featured—perhaps I should rather say, a hard-featured man; his forehead was knotty, and his cheek-bones were marked and prominent. The character of his face was quite Scotch; but there was feeling in his eye, and emotion in his now agitated countenance. His northern accent in speaking harmonized with his physiognomy. He was at once proud-looking and homely-looking.

He laid his hand on the child's uplifted head. She said,—

"Kiss Polly."

He kissed her. I wished she would utter some hysterical cry, so that I might get relief and be at ease. She made wonderfully little noise: she seemed to have got what she wanted—*all* she wanted, and to be in a trance of content. Neither in mien nor in features was this creature like her sire, and yet she was of his strain: her mind had been filled from his, as the cup from the flagon.

Indisputably, Mr. Home owned manly self-control, however he might secretly feel on some matters. "Polly," he said, looking down on his little girl, "go into the hall; you will see papa's great-coat lying on a chair; put your hand into the pockets, you will find a pocket-handkerchief there; bring it to me."

She obeyed; went and returned deftly and nimbly. He was talking to Mrs. Bretton when she came back, and she waited with the handkerchief in her hand. It was a picture, in its way, to see her, with her tiny stature, and trim, neat shape, standing at his knee. Seeing that he continued to talk, apparently unconscious of her return, she took his hand, opened the unresisting fingers, insinuated into them the handkerchief, and closed them upon it one by one. He still seemed not to see or feel her; but by-and-by, he lifted her to his knee; she nestled against him, and though neither looked at nor spoke to the other for an hour following, I suppose both were satisfied.

During tea, the minute thing's movements and behaviour gave, as usual, full occupation to the eye. First she directed Warren, as he placed the chairs.

"Put papa's chair here, and mine near it, between papa and Mrs. Bretton: *I* must hand his tea."

She took her own seat, and beckoned with her hand to her father.

"Be near me, as if we were at home, papa."

And again, as she intercepted his cup in passing, and would stir the sugar, and put in the cream herself, "I always did it for you at home, papa: nobody could do it as well, not even your own self."

Throughout the meal she continued her attentions: rather absurd they were. The sugar-tongs were too wide for one of her hands, and she had to use both in wielding them; the weight of the silver cream-ewer, the bread-and-butter plates, the very cup and saucer tasked her insufficient strength and dexterity; but she would lift this, hand that, and luckily contrived through it all to break nothing. Candidly speaking, I thought her a little busybody; but her father, blind like other parents, seemed perfectly content to let her wait on him, and even wonderfully soothed by her offices.

"She is my comfort!" he could not help saying to Mrs. Bretton. That lady had her own "comfort" and nonpareil on a much larger scale,

and, for the moment, absent; so she sympathized with his foible.

This second "comfort" came on the stage in the course of the evening. I knew this day had been fixed for his return, and was aware that Mrs. Bretton had been expecting him through all its hours. We were seated round the fire, after tea, when Graham joined our circle: I should rather say, broke it up—for, of course, his arrival made a bustle; and then, as Mr. Graham was fasting, there was refreshment to be provided. He and Mr. Home met as old acquaintance; of the little girl he took no notice for a time.

His meal over, and numerous questions from his mother answered, he turned from the table to the hearth. Opposite where he had placed himself was seated Mr. Home, and at his elbow, the child. When I say *child* I use an inappropriate and undescriptive term—a term suggesting any picture rather than that of the demure little person in a mourning frock and white chemisette, that might just have fitted a good-sized doll—perched now on a high chair beside a stand, whereon was her toy work-box of white varnished wood, and holding in her hands a shred of a handkerchief which she was professing to hem, and at which she bored perseveringly with a needle, that in her fingers seemed almost a skewer, pricking herself ever and anon, marking the cambric with a track of minute red dots; occasionally starting when the perverse

weapon—swerving from her control—inflicted a deeper stab than usual ; but still silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly.

Graham was at that time a handsome, faithless-looking youth of sixteen. I say faithless-looking, not because he was really of a very perfidious disposition, but because the epithet strikes me as proper to describe the fair, Celtic (not Saxon) character of his good looks ; his waved light auburn hair, his supple symmetry, his smile frequent, and destitute neither of fascination nor of subtlety (in no bad sense). A spoiled, whimsical boy he was in those days.

"Mother," he said, after eyeing the little figure before him in silence for some time, and when the temporary absence of Mr. Home from the room relieved him from the half-laughing bashfulness, which was all he knew of timidity—"Mother, I see a young lady in the present society to whom I have not been introduced."

"Mr. Home's little girl, I suppose you mean," said his mother.

"Indeed, ma'am," replied her son, "I consider your expression of the least ceremonious : Miss Home *I* should certainly have said, in venturing to speak of the gentlewoman to whom I allude."

"Now, Graham, I will not have that child teased. Don't flatter yourself that I shall suffer you to make her your butt."

"Miss Home," pursued Graham, undeterred by

his mother's remonstrance, "might I have the honour to introduce myself, since no one else seems willing to render you and me that service? Your slave, John Graham Bretton."

She looked at him; he rose and bowed quite gravely. She deliberately put down thimble, scissors, work; descended with precaution from her perch, and curtsying with unspeakable seriousness, said, "How do you do?"

"I have the honour to be in fair health, only in some measure fatigued with a hurried journey. I hope, ma'am, I see you well."

"Tor-rer-ably well," was the ambitious reply of the little woman; and she now essayed to regain her former elevation, but finding this could not be done without some climbing and straining—a sacrifice of decorum not to be thought of—and being utterly disdainful of aid in the presence of a strange young gentleman, she relinquished the high chair for a low stool: towards that low stool Graham drew in his chair.

"I hope, ma'am, the present residence, my mother's house, appears to you a convenient place of abode?"

"Not par-tic-er-er-ly; I want to go home."

"A natural and laudable desire, ma'am; but one which, notwithstanding, I shall do my best to oppose. I reckon on being able to get of you a little of that precious commodity called amusement, which mamma and Mistress Snowe there fail to yield me."

"I shall have to go with papa soon : I shall not stay long at your mother's."

"Yes, yes ; you will stay with me, I am sure. I have a pony on which you shall ride, and no end of books with pictures to show you."

"Are *you* going to live here now?"

"I am. Does that please you? Do you like me?"

"No.'

"Why?"

"I think you queer."

"My face, ma'am?"

"Your face and all about you. You have long red hair."

"Auburn hair, if you please : mamma calls it auburn, or golden, and so do all her friends. But even with my 'long red hair'" (and he waved his mane with a sort of triumph—tawny he himself well knew that it was, and he was proud of the leonine hue) "I cannot possibly be queerer than is your ladyship."

"You call me queer?"

"Certainly."

(After a pause) "I think I shall go to bed."

"A little thing like you ought to have been in bed many hours since ; but you probably sat up in the expectation of seeing me?"

"No, indeed."

"You certainly wished to enjoy the pleasure of my society. You knew I was coming home, and would wait to have a look at me."

"I sat up for papa, and not for you."

"Very good, Miss Home. I am going to be a favourite: preferred before papa soon, I dare say."

She wished Mrs. Bretton and myself good-night; she seemed hesitating whether Graham's deserts entitled him to the same attention, when he caught her up with one hand, and with that one hand held her poised aloft above his head. She saw herself thus lifted up on high, in the glass over the fireplace. The suddenness, the freedom, the disrespect of the action were too much.

"For shame, Mr. Graham!" was her indignant cry, "put me down!"—and when again on her feet, "I wonder what you would think of me if I were to treat you in that way, lifting you with my hand" (raising that mighty member) "as Warren lifts the little cat."

So saying, she departed.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLAYMATES.

Mr. Home stayed two days. During his visit he could not be prevailed on to go out : he sat all day long by the fireside, sometimes silent, sometimes receiving and answering Mrs. Bretton's chat, which was just of the proper sort for a man in his morbid mood—not over-sympathetic, yet not too uncongenial, sensible ; and even with a touch of the motherly—she was sufficiently his senior to be permitted this touch.

As to Paulina, the child was at once happy and mute, busy and watchful. Her father frequently lifted her to his knee ; she would sit there till she felt or fancied he grew restless ; then it was,—

"Papa, put me down ; I shall tire you with my weight."

And the mighty burden slid to the rug, and establishing itself on carpet or stool just at "papa's" feet, the white work-box and the scarlet-speckled handkerchief came into play. This handkerchief, it seems, was intended as a keepsake for

"papa," and must be finished before his departure; consequently the demand on the sempstress's industry (she accomplished about a score of stitches in half an hour) was stringent.

The evening, by restoring Graham to the maternal roof (his days were passed at school), brought us an accession of animation—a quality not diminished by the nature of the scenes pretty sure to be enacted between him and Miss Paulina.

A distant and haughty demeanour had been the result of the indignity put upon her the first evening of his arrival: her usual answer, when he addressed her, was,—

"I can't attend to you; I have other things to think about." Being implored to state *what* things: "Business."

Graham would endeavour to seduce her attention by opening his desk and displaying its multifarious contents: seals, bright sticks of wax, pen-knives, with a miscellany of engravings—some of them gaily coloured—which he had amassed from time to time. Nor was this powerful temptation wholly unavailing: her eyes, furtively raised from her work, cast many a peep towards the writing-table, rich in scattered pictures. An etching of a child playing with a Blenheim spaniel happened to flutter to the floor.

"Pretty little dog!" said she, delighted.

Graham prudently took no notice. Ere long, stealing from her corner, she approached to examine

the treasure more closely. The dog's great eyes and long ears, and the child's hat and feathers, were irresistible.

"Nice picture!" was her favourable criticism.

"Well—you may have it," said Graham.

She seemed to hesitate. The wish to possess was strong, but to accept would be a compromise of dignity. No. She put it down and turned away.

"You won't have it, then, Polly?"

"I would rather not, thank you."

"Shall I tell you what I will do with the picture if you refuse it?"

She half turned to listen.

"Cut it into strips for lighting the taper."

"No!"

"But I shall."

"Please—don't."

Graham waxed inexorable on hearing the pleading tone; he took the scissors from his mother's work-casket.

"Here goes!" said he, making a menacing flourish. "Right through Fido's head, and splitting little Harry's nose."

"No! *No!* NO!"

"Then come to me. Come quickly, or it is done."

She hesitated, lingered, but complied.

"Now, will you have it?" he asked, as she stood before him.

"Please."

"But I shall want payment."

"How much?"

"A kiss."

"Give the picture first into my hand."

Polly, as she said this, looked rather faithless in her turn. Graham gave it. She absconded a debtor, darted to her father, and took refuge on his knee. Graham rose in mimic wrath and followed. She buried her face in Mr. Home's waistcoat.

"Papa—papa—send him away!"

"I'll not be sent away," said Graham.

With face still averted, she held out her hand to keep him off.

"Then I shall kiss the hand," said he; but that moment it became a miniature fist, and dealt him payment in a small coin that was not kisses.

Graham—not failing in his way to be as wily as his little playmate—retreated apparently quite discomfited; he flung himself upon a sofa, and resting his head against the cushion, lay like one in pain. Polly, finding him silent, presently peeped at him. His eyes and face were covered with his hands. She turned on her father's knee, and gazed at her foe anxiously and long. Graham groaned.

"Papa, what is the matter?" she whispered.

"You had better ask him, Polly."

"Is he hurt?" (Groan second.)

"He makes a noise as if he were," said Mr. Home.

"Mother," suggested Graham, feebly, "I think

you had better send for the doctor. Oh, my eye!" (Renewed silence, broken only by sighs from Graham.)

"If I were to become blind—?" suggested this last.

His chastiser could not bear the suggestion. She was beside him directly.

"Let me see your eye: I did not mean to touch it, only your mouth; and I did not think I hit so *very* hard."

Silence answered her. Her features worked,—"I am sorry; I am sorry!"

Then succeeded emotion, faltering, weeping.

"Have done trying that child, Graham," said Mrs. Bretton.

"It is all nonsense, my pet," cried Mr. Home.

And Graham once more snatched her aloft, and she again punished him; and while she pulled his lion's locks, termed him—

"The naughtiest, rudest, worst, untruest person that ever was."

* * * * * *

On the morning of Mr. Home's departure, he and his daughter had some conversation in a window-recess by themselves; I heard part of it.

"Couldn't I pack my box and go with you, papa?" she whispered earnestly.

He shook his head.

"Should I be a trouble to you?"

"Yes, Polly."

"Because I am little?"

"Because you are little and tender. It is only great, strong people that should travel. But don't look sad, my little girl; it breaks my heart. Papa will soon come back to his Polly."

"Indeed, indeed, I am not sad, scarcely at all."

"Polly would be sorry to give papa pain; would she not?"

"Sorrier than sorry."

"Then Polly must be cheerful: not cry at parting; not fret afterwards. She must look forward to meeting again, and try to be happy meanwhile. Can she do this?"

"She will try."

"I see she will. Farewell, then. It is time to go."

"*Now?*—just *now?*"

"Just now."

She held up quivering lips. Her father sobbed, but she, I remarked, did not. Having put her down, he shook hands with the rest present, and departed.

When the street-door closed, she dropped on her knees at a chair with a cry—"Papa!"

It was low and long; a sort of "Why hast thou forsaken me?" During an ensuing space of some minutes, I perceived she endured agony. She went through, in that brief interval of her infant life, emotions such as some never feel; it was in her constitution: she would have more of such instants

if she lived. Nobody spoke. Mrs. Bretton, being a mother, shed a tear or two. Graham, who was writing, lifted up his eyes and gazed at her. I, Lucy Snowe, was calm.

The little creature, thus left unharassed, did for herself what none other could do—contended with an intolerable feeling; and, ere long, in some degree, repressed it. That day she would accept solace from none; nor the next day: she grew more passive afterwards.

On the third evening, as she sat on the floor, worn and quiet, Graham, coming in, took her up gently, without a word. She did not resist: she rather nestled in his arms, as if weary. When he sat down, she laid her head against him; in a few minutes she slept; he carried her upstairs to bed. I was not surprised that, the next morning, the first thing she demanded was, "Where is Mr. Graham?"

It happened that Graham was not coming to the breakfast-table; he had some exercises to write for that morning's class, and had requested his mother to send a cup of tea into the study. Polly volunteered to carry it: she must be busy about something, look after somebody. The cup was entrusted to her; for, if restless, she was also careful. As the study was opposite the breakfast-room, the doors facing across the passage, my eye followed her.

"What are you doing?" she asked, pausing on the threshold.

"Writing," said Graham.

"Why don't you come to take breakfast with your mamma?"

"Too busy."

"Do you want any breakfast?"

"Of course."

"There, then."

And she deposited the cup on the carpet, like a jailer putting a prisoner's pitcher of water through his cell-door, and retreated. Presently she returned.

"What will you have besides tea—what to eat?"

"Anything good. Bring me something particularly nice; that's a kind little woman."

She came back to Mrs. Bretton.

"Please, ma'am, send your boy something good."

"You shall choose for him, Polly; what shall my boy have?"

She selected a portion of whatever was best on the table, and, ere long, came back with a whispered request for some marmalade, which was not there. Having got it, however (for Mrs. Bretton refused the pair nothing), Graham was shortly after heard lauding her to the skies; promising that, when he had a house of his own, she should be his housekeeper, and perhaps—if she showed any culinary genius—his cook; and, as she did not return, and I went to look after her, I found Graham and her breakfasting *tête-à-tête*—she standing at his elbow, and sharing his fare: excepting the marmalade, which she delicately refused to

touch, lest, I suppose, it should appear that she had procured it as much on her own account as his. She constantly evinced these nice perceptions and delicate instincts.

The league of acquaintanceship thus struck up was not hastily dissolved; on the contrary, it appeared that time and circumstances served rather to cement than loosen it. Ill-assimilated as the two were in age, sex, pursuits, &c., they somehow found a great deal to say to each other. As to Paulina, I observed that her little character never properly came out, except with young Bretton. As she got settled, and accustomed to the house, she proved tractable enough with Mrs. Bretton; but she would sit on a stool at that lady's feet all day long, learning her task, or sewing, or drawing figures with a pencil on a slate, and never kindling once to originality, or showing a single gleam of the peculiarities of her nature. I ceased to watch her under such circumstances: she was not interesting. But the moment Graham's knock sounded of an evening, a change occurred; she was instantly at the head of the staircase. Usually her welcome was a reprimand or a threat.

"You have not wiped your shoes properly on the mat. I shall tell your mamma."

"Little busybody! Are you there?"

"Yes—and you can't reach me: I am higher up than you" (peeping between the rails of the banister; she could not look over them).

"Polly!"

"My dear boy" (such was one of her terms for him, adopted in imitation of his mother).

"I am fit to faint with fatigue," declared Graham, leaning against the passage-wall in seeming exhaustion. "Dr. Digby" (the head-master) "has quite knocked me up with overwork. Just come down and help me to carry up my books."

"Ah! you're cunning!"

"Not at all, Polly—it is positive fact. I'm as weak as a rush. Come down."

"Your eyes are quiet like the cat's, but you'll spring."

"Spring? Nothing of the kind: it isn't in me. Come down."

"Perhaps I may—if you'll promise not to touch—not to snatch me up, and not to whirl me round."

"I? I couldn't do it!" (sinking into a chair).

"Then put the books down on the first step, and go three yards off."

This being done, she descended warily, and not taking her eyes from the feeble Graham. Of course her approach always galvanized him to new and spasmodic life: the game of romps was sure to be exacted. Sometimes she would be angry; sometimes the matter was allowed to pass smoothly, and we could hear her say as she led him upstairs,—

"Now, my dear boy, come and take your tea—I am sure you must want something."

It was sufficiently comical to observe her as she

sat beside Graham, while he took that meal. In his absence she was a still personage, but with him the most officious, fidgety little body possible. I often wished she would mind herself and be tranquil ; but no—herself was forgotten in him : he could not be sufficiently well waited on, nor carefully enough looked after : he was more than the Grand Turk in her estimation. She would gradually assemble the various plates before him, and, when one would suppose all he could possibly desire was within his reach, she would find out something else :—

"Ma'am," she would whisper to Mrs. Bretton—"perhaps your son would like a little cake—sweet cake, you know—there is some in there" (pointing to the sideboard cupboard). Mrs. Bretton, as a rule, disapproved of sweet cake at tea, but still the request was urged—"One little piece—only for him—as he goes to school : girls—such as me and Miss Snowe—don't need treats, but *he* would like it."

Graham did like it very well, and almost always got it. To do him justice, he would have shared his prize with her to whom he owed it ; but that was never allowed : to insist, was to ruffle her for the evening. To stand by his knee, and monopolize his talk and notice, was the reward she wanted—not a share of the cake.

With curious readiness did she adapt herself to such themes as interested him. One would have thought the child had no mind or life of her own, but must necessarily live, move, and have her being

in another: now that her father was taken from her, she nestled to Graham, and seemed to feel by his feelings: to exist in his existence. She learned the names of all his school-fellows in a trice; she got by heart their characters as given from his lips: a single description of an individual seemed to suffice. She never forgot, or confused identities: she would talk with him the whole evening about people she had never seen, and appear completely to realize their aspect, manners, and dispositions. Some she learned to mimic: an under-master, who was an aversion of young Bretton's, had, it seems, some peculiarities, which she caught up in a moment from Graham's representation, and rehearsed for his amusement; this, however, Mrs. Bretton disapproved and forbade.

The pair seldom quarrelled; yet once a rupture occurred, in which her feelings received a severe shock.

One day Graham, on the occasion of his birthday, had some friends—lads of his own age—to dine with him. Paulina took much interest in the coming of these friends; she had frequently heard of them; they were amongst those of whom Graham oftenest spoke. After dinner, the young gentlemen were left by themselves in the dining-room, where they soon became very merry and made a good deal of noise. Chancing to pass through the hall I found Paulina sitting alone on the lowest step of the staircase, her eyes fixed on the glossy panels of

the dining-room door, where the reflection of the hall-lamp was shining ; her little brow knit in anxious meditation.

"What are you thinking about, Polly ?"

"Nothing particular ; only I wish that door was clear glass—that I might see through it. The boys seem very cheerful, and I want to go to them : I want to be with Graham, and watch his friends."

"What hinders you from going ?"

"I feel afraid : but may I try, do you think ? May I knock at the door, and ask to be let in ?"

I thought perhaps they might not object to have her as a playmate, and therefore encouraged the attempt.

She knocked—too faintly at first to be heard, but on second essay the door unclosed ; Graham's head appeared ; he looked in high spirits, but impatient.

"What do you want, you little monkey ?"

"To come to you."

"Do you indeed ? As if I would be troubled with you ! Away to mamma and Mistress Snowe, and tell them to put you to bed." The auburn head and bright flushed face vanished—the door shut peremptorily. She was stunned.

"Why does he speak so ? He never spoke so before," she said in consternation. "What have I done ?"

"Nothing, Polly ; but Graham is busy with his school-friends."

"And he likes them better than me ! He turns me away now they are here !"

I had some thoughts of consoling her, and of improving the occasion by inculcating some of those maxims of philosophy whereof I had ever a tolerable stock ready for application. She stopped me, however, by putting her fingers in her ears at the first words I uttered, and then lying down on the mat with her face against the flags; nor could either Warren or the cook root her from that position: she was allowed to lie, therefore, till she chose to rise of her own accord.

Graham forgot his impatience the same evening, and would have accosted her as usual when his friends were gone, but she wrenched herself from his hand; her eye quite flashed; she would not bid him good-night; she would not look in his face. The next day he treated her with indifference, and she grew like a bit of marble. The day after, he teased her to know what was the matter; her lips would not unclose. Of course he could not feel real anger on his side: the match was too unequal in every way; he tried soothing and coaxing. "Why was she so angry? What had he done?" By-and-by tears answered him; he petted her, and they were friends. But she was one on whom such incidents were not lost: I remarked that never after this rebuff did she seek him, or follow him, or in any way solicit his notice. I told her once to carry a book or some other article to Graham when he was shut up in his study.

"I shall wait till he comes out," said she, proudly; "I don't choose to give him the trouble of rising to open the door."

Young Bretton had a favourite pony on which he often rode out; from the window she always watched his departure and return. It was her ambition to be permitted to have a ride round the courtyard on this pony; but far be it from her to ask such a favour. One day she descended to the yard to watch him dismount; as she leaned against the gate, the longing wish for the indulgence of a ride glittered in her eye.

"Come, Polly, will you have a canter?" asked Graham, half carelessly. I suppose she thought he was *too* careless.

"No, thank you," said she, turning away with the utmost coolness.

"You'd better," pursued he. "You will like it, I am sure."

"Don't think I should care a fig about it," was the response.

"That is not true. You told Lucy Snowe you longed to have a ride."

"Lucy Snow is a *tatter*-box," I heard her say (her imperfect articulation was the least precocious thing she had about her): and with this she walked into the house. Graham, coming in soon after, observed to his mother,—

"Mamma, I believe that creature is a changeling; she is a perfect cabinet of oddities; but I should be

dull without her, she amuses me a great deal more than you or Lucy Snowe."

* * * * * *

"Miss Snowe," said Paulina to me (she had now got into the habit of occasionally chatting with me when we were alone in our room at night), "do you know on what day in the week I like Graham best?"

"How can I possibly know anything so strange? Is there one day out of the seven when he is otherwise than on the other six?"

"To be sure! Can't you see? Don't you know? I find him the most excellent on a Sunday; then we have him the whole day, and he is quiet, and, in the evening, *so* kind."

This observation was not altogether groundless: going to church, &c., kept Graham quiet on the Sunday, and the evening he generally dedicated to a serene, though rather indolent sort of enjoyment by the parlour fireside. He would take possession of the couch, and then he would call Polly.

Graham was a boy not quite as other boys are; all his delight did not lie in action: he was capable of some intervals of contemplation; he could take a pleasure too in reading, nor was his selection of books wholly indiscriminate: there were glimmerings of characteristic preference, and even of instinctive taste in his choice. He rarely, it is true, remarked on what he read, but I have seen him sit and think of it.

Polly, being near him, kneeling on a little cushion or the carpet, a conversation would begin in murmurs, not inaudible, though subdued. I caught a snatch of their tenor now and then ; and, in truth, some influence better and finer than that of every day, seemed to soothe Graham at such times into no ungentle mood.

"Have you learned any hymns this week, Polly ?"

"I have learned a very pretty one, four verses long. Shall I say it ?"

"Speak nicely, then : don't be in a hurry."

The hymn being rehearsed, or rather half-chanted, in a little singing voice, Graham would take exceptions at the manner, and proceed to give a lesson in recitation. She was quick in learning, apt in imitating ; and, besides, her pleasure was to please Graham : she proved a ready scholar. To the hymn would succeed some reading—perhaps a chapter in the Bible ; correction was seldom required here, for the child could read any simple narrative chapter very well ; and, when the subject was such as she could understand and take an interest in, her expression and emphasis were something remarkable. Joseph cast into the pit ; the calling of Samuel ; Daniel in the lions' den ;—these were favourite passages : of the first especially she seemed perfectly to feel the pathos.

"Poor Jacob !" she would sometimes say, with quivering lips. "How he loved his son Joseph !

As much," she once added—"as much, Graham, as I love you: if you were to die" (and she re-opened the book, sought the verse, and read), "I should 'refuse to be comforted, and go down into the grave to you mourning.'"

With these words she gathered Graham in her little arms, drawing his long tressed head towards her. The action, I remember, struck me as strangely rash; exciting the feeling one might experience on seeing an animal dangerous by nature, and but half-tamed by art, too heedlessly fondled. Not that I feared Graham would hurt, or very roughly check her; but I thought she ran a risk of incurring such a careless, impatient repulse, as would be worse almost to her than a blow. On the whole, however, these demonstrations were borne passively: sometimes even a sort of complacent wonder at her earnest partiality would smile not unkindly in his eyes. Once he said,—

"You like me almost as well as if you were my little sister, Polly."

"Oh! I *do* like you," said she; "I *do* like you very much."

* * * * * *

I was not long allowed the amusement of this study of character. She had scarcely been at Bretton two months, when a letter came from Mr. Home signifying that he was now settled amongst his maternal kinsfolk on the Continent; that, as England was become wholly distasteful to him, he

had no thoughts of returning thither, perhaps, for years; and that he wished his little girl to join him immediately.

"I wonder how she will take this news?" said Mrs. Bretton, when she had read the letter. *I* wondered, too, and I took upon myself to communicate it.

Repairing to the drawing-room—in which calm and decorated apartment she was fond of being alone, and where she could be implicitly trusted, for she fingered nothing, or rather soiled nothing she fingered—I found her seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch, half shaded by the drooping draperies of the window near. She seemed happy; all her appliances for occupation were about her; the white wood work-box, a shred or two of muslin, an end or two of ribbon, collected for conversion into doll-millinery. The doll, duly night-capped and night-gowned, lay in its cradle; she was rocking it to sleep, with an air of the most perfect faith in its possession of sentient and somnolent faculties: her eyes, at the same time, being engaged with a picture-book, which lay open on her lap.

"Miss Snowe," said she in a whisper, "this is a wonderful book. Candace" (the doll, christened by Graham; for, indeed, its begrimed complexion gave it much of an Ethiopian aspect)—"Candace is asleep now, and I may tell you about it; only we must both speak low lest she should waken. This

book was given me by Graham; it tells about distant countries, a long, long way from England, which no traveller can reach without sailing thousands of miles over the sea. Wild men live in these countries, Miss Snowe, who wear clothes different from ours: indeed, some of them wear scarcely any clothes, for the sake of being cool, you know; for they have very hot weather. Here is a picture of thousands gathered in a desolate place—a plain spread with sand—round a man in black,—a good, *good* Englishman—a missionary, who is preaching to them under a palm-tree." (She showed a little cut to that effect.) "And here are pictures" (she went on) "more stranger" (grammar was occasionally forgotten) "than that. There is the wonderful Great Wall of China; here is a Chinese lady, with a foot littler than mine. There is a wild horse of Tartary; and here, most strange of all—is a land of ice and snow, without green fields, woods or gardens. In this land they found some mammoth bones: there are no mammoths now. You don't know what it was; but I can tell you, because Graham told me. A mighty, goblin creature, as high as this room, and as long as the hall; but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing, Graham thinks. He believes, if I met one in a forest, it would not kill me, unless I came quite in its way; when it would trample me down amongst the bushes, as I might tread on a grasshopper in a hayfield without knowing it."

Thus she rambled on.

"Polly," I interrupted, "should you like to travel?"

"Not just yet," was the prudent answer; "but perhaps in twenty years, when I am grown a woman, as tall as Mrs. Bretton, I may travel with Graham. We intend going to Switzerland, and climbing Mount Blanck; and some day we shall sail over to South America, and walk to the top of Kim—kim—borazo."

"But how would you like to travel now, if your papa was with you?"

Her reply—not given till after a pause—evinced one of those unexpected turns of temper peculiar to her:—

"Where is the good of talking in that silly way?" said she. "Why do you mention papa? What is papa to you? I was just beginning to be happy, and not think about him so much; and there it will be all to do over again!"

Her lip trembled. I hastened to disclose the fact of a letter having been received, and to mention the directions given that she and Harriet should immediately rejoin this dear papa. "Now, Polly, are you not glad?" I added.

She made no answer. She dropped her book, and ceased to rock her doll; she gazed at me with gravity and earnestness.

"Shall not you like to go to papa?"

"Of course," she said at last in that trenchant manner she usually employed in speaking to me; and which was quite different from that she used

with Mrs. Bretton, and different again from the one dedicated to Graham. I wished to ascertain more of what she thought; but no: she would converse no more. Hastening to Mrs. Bretton, she questioned her, and received the confirmation of my news. The weight and importance of these tidings kept her perfectly serious the whole day. In the evening, at the moment Graham's entrance was heard below, I found her at my side. She began to arrange a locket-ribbon about my neck, she displaced and replaced the comb in my hair; while thus busied, Graham entered.

"Tell him by-and-by," she whispered; "tell him I am going."

In the course of tea-time I made the desired communication. Graham, it chanced, was at that time greatly pre-occupied about some school-prize, for which he was competing. The news had to be told twice before it took proper hold of his attention, and even then he dwelt on it but momently.

"Polly going? What a pity! Dear little Mousie, I shall be sorry to lose her: she must come to us again, mamma."

And hastily swallowing his tea, he took a candle and a small table to himself and his books, and was soon buried in study.

"Little Mousie" crept to his side, and lay down on the carpet at his feet, her face to the floor; mute and motionless she kept that post and position till bed-time. Once I saw Graham—wholly unconscious

of her proximity—push her with his restless foot. She receded an inch or two. A minute after one little hand stole out from beneath her face, to which it had been pressed, and softly caressed the heedless foot. When summoned by her nurse she rose and departed very obediently, having bid us all a subdued good-night.

I will not say that I dreaded going to bed, an hour later; yet I certainly went with an unquiet anticipation that I should find that child in no peaceful sleep. The forewarning of my instinct was but fulfilled, when I discovered her, all cold and vigilant, perched like a white bird on the outside of the bed. I scarcely knew how to accost her; she was not to be managed like another child. She, however, accosted me. As I closed the door, and put the light on the dressing-table, she turned to me with these words:—

"I cannot—*cannot* sleep; and in this way I cannot—*cannot* live!"

I asked what ailed her.

"Dedful miz-er-y!" said she, with her piteous lisp.

"Shall I call Mrs. Bretton?"

"That is downright silly," was her impatient reply; and, indeed, I well knew that if she had heard Mrs. Bretton's foot approach, she would have nestled quiet as a mouse under the bedclothes. Whilst lavishing her eccentricities regardlessly before me—for whom she professed scarcely the

semblance of affection—she never showed my godmother one glimpse of her inner self: for her, she was nothing but a docile, somewhat quaint little maiden. I examined her; her cheek was crimson; her dilated eye was both troubled and glowing, and painfully restless: in this state it was obvious she must not be left till morning. I guessed how the case stood.

"Would you like to bid Graham good-night again?" I asked. "He is not gone to his room yet."

She at once stretched out her little arms to be lifted. Folding a shawl round her, I carried her back to the drawing-room. Graham was just coming out.

"She cannot sleep without seeing and speaking to you once more," I said. "She does not like the thought of leaving you."

"I've spoilt her," said he, taking her from me with good humour, and kissing her little hot face and burning lips. "Polly, you care for me more than for papa, now—"

"I *do* care for you, but you care nothing for me," was her whisper.

She was assured to the contrary, again kissed, restored to me, and I carried her away; but, alas! not soothed.

When I thought she could listen to me, I said,—

"Paulina, you should not grieve that Graham

does not care for you so much as you care for him. It must be so."

Her lifted and questioning eyes asked why.

"Because he is a boy and you are a girl; he is sixteen and you are only six; his nature is strong and gay, and yours is otherwise."

"But I love him so much; he *should* love me a little."

"He does. He is fond of you. You are his favourite."

"Am I Graham's favourite?"

"Yes, more than any little child I know."

The assurance soothed her; she smiled in her anguish.

"But," I continued, "don't fret, and don't expect too much of him, or else he will feel you to be troublesome, and then it is all over."

"All over!" she echoed softly, "then I'll be good. I'll try to be good, Lucy Snowe."

I put her to bed.

"Will he forgive me this one time?" she asked, as I undressed myself. I assured her that he would; that as yet he was by no means alienated; that she had only to be careful for the future.

"There is no future," said she: "I am going. Shall I ever—ever—see him again, after I leave England?"

I returned an encouraging response. The candle being extinguished, a still half-hour elapsed. I thought her asleep, when the little white shape

once more lifted itself in the crib, and the small voice asked—"Do you like Graham, Miss Snowe?"

"Like him! Yes, a little."

"Only a little? Do you like him as I do?"

"I think not. No: not as you do."

"Do you like him much?"

"I told you I liked him a little. Where is the use of caring for him so very much? he is full of faults."

"Is he?"

"All boys are."

"More than girls?"

"Very likely. Wise people say it is folly to think anybody perfect; and as to likes and dislikes, we should be friendly to all, and worship none."

"Are you a wise person?"

"I mean to try to be so. Go to sleep."

"I *cannot* go to sleep. Have you no pain just here" (laying her elfish hand on her elfish breast), "when you think *you* shall have to leave Graham; for *your* home is not here?"

"Surely, Polly," said I, "you should not feel so much pain when you are so very soon going to rejoin your father. Have you forgotten him? Do you no longer wish to be his little companion?"

Dead silence succeeded this question.

"Child, lie down and sleep," I urged.

"My bed is cold," said she. "I can't warm it."

I saw the little thing shiver. "Come to me," I

said, wishing, yet scarcely hoping, that she would comply; for she was a most strange, capricious little creature, and especially whimsical with me. She came, however, instantly, like a small ghost gliding over the carpet. I took her in. She was chill: I warmed her in my arms. She trembled nervously: I soothed her. Thus tranquillized and cherished she at last slumbered.

"A very unique child," thought I, as I viewed her sleeping countenance by the fitful moonlight, and cautiously and softly wiped her glittering eyelids and her wet cheeks with my handkerchief. "How will she get through this world, or battle with this life? How will she bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason, tell me are prepared for all flesh?"

She departed the next day; trembling like a leaf when she took leave, but exercising self-command.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS MARCHMONT.

On quitting Bretton, which I did a few weeks after Paulina's departure—little thinking then I was never again to visit it; never more to tread its calm old streets—I betook myself home, having been absent six months. It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass—the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?

Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently

soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time—of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished.

As far as I recollect, I complained to no one about these troubles. Indeed, to whom could I complain? Of Mrs. Bretton I had long lost sight. Impediments, raised by others, had, years ago, come in the way of our intercourse, and cut it off. Besides, time had brought changes for her too: the handsome property of which she was left guardian for her son, and which had been chiefly invested in some joint-stock undertaking, had melted, it was said, to a fraction of its original amount. Graham, I learned from incidental rumours, had adopted a profession; both he and his mother were gone from Bretton, and were understood to be now in London. Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look. I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but

self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon thousands besides; and when Miss Marchmont, a maiden lady of our neighbourhood, sent for me, I obeyed her behest, in the hope that she might assign me some task I could undertake.

Miss Marchmont was a woman of fortune, and lived in a handsome residence; but she was a rheumatic cripple, impotent, foot and hand, and had been so for twenty years. She always sat upstairs: her drawing-room adjoined her bedroom. I had often heard of Miss Marchmont, and of her peculiarities (she had the character of being very eccentric), but till now had never seen her. I found her a furrowed, grey-haired woman, grave with solitude, stern with long affliction, irritable also, and perhaps exacting. It seemed that a maid, or rather a companion, who had waited on her for some years, was about to be married; and she, hearing of my bereaved lot, had sent for me, with the idea that I might supply this person's place. She made the proposal to me after tea, as she and I sat alone by her fireside.

"It will not be an easy life," said she candidly, "for I require a good deal of attention, and you will be much confined; yet perhaps, contrasted with the existence you have lately led, it may appear tolerable."

I reflected. Of course it ought to appear tolerable, I argued inwardly; but somehow, by

some strange fatality, it would not. To live here, in this close room, the watcher of suffering—sometimes, perhaps, the butt of temper—through all that was to come of my youth; while all that was gone had passed, to say the least, not blissfully! My heart sunk one moment, then it revived; for though I forced myself to *realize* evils, I think I was too prosaic to *idealize*, and consequently to exaggerate them.

"My doubt is whether I should have strength for the undertaking," I observed.

"That is my own scruple," said she; "for you look a worn-out creature!"

So I did. I saw myself in the glass, in my mourning-dress, a faded, hollow-eyed vision. Yet I thought little of the wan spectacle. The blight, I believed, was chiefly external: I still felt life at life's sources.

"What else have you in view—anything?"

"Nothing clear as yet: but I may find something."

"So you imagine: perhaps you are right. Try your own method then; and if it does not succeed, test mine. The chance I have offered shall be left open to you for three months."

This was kind. I told her so, and expressed my gratitude. While I was speaking, a paroxysm of pain came on. I ministered to her; made the necessary applications, according to her directions, and, by the time she was relieved, a sort of intimacy

was already formed between us. I, for my part, had learned from the manner in which she bore this attack, that she was a firm, patient woman (patient under physical pain, though sometimes perhaps excitable under long mental canker); and she, from the good-will with which I succoured her, discovered that she could influence my sympathies (such as they were). She sent for me the next day; for five or six successive days she claimed my company. Closer acquaintance, while it developed both faults and eccentricities, opened, at the same time, a view of a character I could respect. Stern and even morose as she sometimes was, I could wait on her and sit beside her with that calm which always blesses us when we are sensible that our manners, presence, contact, please and soothe the persons we serve. Even when she scolded me—which she did, now and then, very tartly—it was in such a way as did not humiliate, and left no sting; it was rather like an irascible mother rating her daughter, than a harsh mistress lecturing a dependent: lecture, indeed, she could not, though she could occasionally storm. Moreover, a vein of reason ever ran through her passion: she was logical even when fierce. Ere long a growing sense of attachment began to present the thought of staying with her as companion in quite a new light; in another week I had agreed to remain.

Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my

all. Her service was my duty—her pain, my suffering—her relief, my hope—her anger, my punishment—her regard, my reward. I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber; I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. Tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air; my appetite needed no more than the tiny messes served for the invalid. In addition she gave me the originality of her character to study: the steadiness of her virtues, I will add, the power of her passions, to admire; the truth of her feelings to trust. All these things she had, and for these things I clung to her.

For these things I would have crawled on with her for twenty years, if for twenty years longer her life of endurance had been protracted. But another decree was written. It seemed I must be stimulated into action. I must be goaded, driven, stung, forced to energy. My little morsel of human affection, which I prized as if it were a solid pearl, must melt in my fingers and slip thence like a dissolving hailstone. My small adopted duty must be snatched from my easily contented conscience. I had wanted to compromise with Fate: to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. Fate would not so be pacified; nor would Providence sanction this shrinking sloth and cowardly indolence.

One February night—I remember it well—there came a voice near Miss Marchmont's house, heard by every inmate, but translated, perhaps, only by one. After a calm winter, storms were ushering in the spring. I had put Miss Marchmont to bed; I sat at the fireside sewing. The wind was wailing at the windows: it had wailed all day; but, as night deepened, it took a new tone—an accent keen, piercing, almost articulate to the ear; a plaint, piteous and disconsolate to the nerves, trilled in every gust.

"Oh, hush! hush!" I said in my disturbed mind, dropping my work, and making a vain effort to stop my ears against that subtle, searching cry. I had heard that very voice ere this, and compulsory observation had forced on me a theory as to what it boded. Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee. I fancied, too, I had noticed—but was not philosopher enough to know whether there was any connection between the circumstances—that we often at the same time hear of disturbed volcanic action in distant parts of the world; of rivers suddenly rushing above their banks; and of strange high tides flowing furiously in on low sea-

coasts. "Our globe," I had said to myself, "seems at such periods torn and disordered; the feeble amongst us wither in her distempered breath, rushing hot from steaming volcanoes."

I listened and trembled; Miss Marchmont slept.

About midnight, the storm in one half-hour fell to a dead calm. The fire, which had been burning dead, glowed up vividly. I felt the air change, and become keen. Raising blind and curtain, I looked out, and saw in the stars the keen sparkle of a sharp frost.

Turning away, the object that met my eyes was Miss Marchmont awake, lifting her head from the pillow, and regarding me with unusual earnestness.

"Is it a fine night?" she asked.

I replied in the affirmative.

"I thought so," she said; "for I feel so strong, so well. Raise me. I feel young to-night," she continued; "young, light-hearted, and happy. What if my complaint be about to take a turn, and I am yet destined to enjoy health? It would be a miracle!"

"And these are not the days of miracles," I thought to myself, and wondered to hear her talk so. She went on directing her conversation to the past, and seeming to recall its incidents, scenes, and personages, with singular vividness.

"I love memory to-night," she said: "I prize her as my best friend. She is just now giving me a deep delight: she is bringing back to my heart, in

warm and beautiful life, realities—not mere empty ideas, but what were once realities, and that I long have thought decayed, dissolved, mixed in with grave-mould. I possess just now the hours, the thoughts, the hopes of my youth. I renew the love of my life—its only love—almost its only affection ; for I am not a particularly good woman : I am not amiable. Yet I have had my feelings, strong and concentrated ; and these feelings had their object ; which, in its single self, was dear to me, as, to the majority of men and women, are all the unnumbered points on which they dissipate their regard. While I loved, and while I was loved, what an existence I enjoyed ! What a glorious year I can recall—how bright it comes back to me ! What a living spring—what a warm, glad summer—what soft moonlight, silvering the autumn evenings—what strength of hope under the ice-bound waters and frost-hoar fields of that year's winter ! Through that year my heart lived with Frank's heart. O my noble Frank—my faithful Frank—my *good* Frank ! so much better than myself—his standard in all things so much higher ! This I can now see and say : if few women have suffered as I did in his loss, few have enjoyed what I did in his love. It was a far better kind of love than common ; I had no doubts about it or him : it was such a love as honoured, protected, and elevated, no less than it gladdened her to whom it was given. Let me now ask, just at this moment, when my mind is so strangely clear,—

let me reflect why it was taken from me! For what crime was I condemned, after twelve months of bliss, to undergo thirty years of sorrow?

"I do not know," she continued, after a pause: "I cannot—*cannot* see the reason; yet at this hour I can say with sincerity, what I never tried to say before—Inscrutable God, Thy will be done! And at this moment I can believe that death will restore me to Frank. I never believed it till now."

"He is dead then?" I inquired in a low voice.

"My dear girl," said she, "one happy Christmas Eve I dressed and decorated myself, expecting my lover, very soon to be my husband, would come that night to visit me. I sat down to wait. Once more I see that moment—I see the snow-twilight stealing through the window over which the curtain was not dropped, for I designed to watch him ride up the white walk; I see and feel the soft firelight warming me, playing on my silk dress, and fitfully showing me my own young figure in a glass. I see the moon of a calm winter night, float full, clear, and cold, over the inky mass of shrubbery, and the silvered turf of my grounds. I wait, with some impatience in my pulse, but no doubt in my breast. The flames had died in the fire, but it was a bright mass yet; the moon was mounting high, but she was still visible from the lattice; the clock neared ten; he rarely tarried later than this, but once or twice he had been delayed so long.

"Would he for once fail me? No—not even for once; and now he was coming—and coming fast—to atone for the lost time. 'Frank! you furious rider,' I said inwardly, listening gladly, yet anxiously, to his approaching gallop, 'you shall be rebuked for this: I will tell you it is *my* neck you are putting in peril; for whatever is yours is, in a dearer and tenderer sense, mine.' There he was: I saw him; but I think tears were in my eyes, my sight was so confused. I saw the horse; I heard it stamp—I saw at least a mass; I heard a clamour. *Was* it a horse? or what heavy, dragging thing was it, crossing, strangely dark, the lawn? How could I name that thing in the moonlight before me? or how could I utter the feeling which rose in my soul?

"I could only run out. A great animal—truly, Frank's black horse—stood trembling, panting, snorting before the door; a man held it: Frank, as I thought.

"'What is the matter?' I demanded. Thomas, my own servant, answered by saying sharply, 'Go into the house, madam.' And then calling to another servant, who came hurrying from the kitchen as if summoned by some instinct, 'Ruth, take missis into the house directly.' But I was kneeling down in the snow, beside something that lay there—something that I had seen dragged along the ground—something that sighed, that groaned on my breast, as I lifted and drew it to me. He was not dead; he was not quite

unconscious. I had him carried in ; I refused to be ordered about and thrust from him. I was quite collected enough, not only to be my own mistress but the mistress of others. They had begun by trying to treat me like a child, as they always do people struck by God's hand ; but I gave place to none except the surgeon ; and when he had done what he could, I took my dying Frank to myself. He had strength to fold me in his arms ; he had power to speak my name ; he heard me as I prayed over him very softly, he felt me as I tenderly and fondly comforted him.

" 'Maria,' he said, 'I am dying in Paradise.' He spent his last breath in faithful words for me. When the dawn of Christmas morning broke, my Frank was with God.

"And that," she went on, "happened thirty years ago. I have suffered since. I doubt if I have made the best use of all my calamities. Soft, amiable natures they would have refined to saintliness ; of strong evil spirits they would have made demons ; as for me, I have only been a woe-struck and selfish woman."

"You have done much good," I said ; for she was noted for her liberal almsgiving.

"I have not withheld money, you mean, where it could assuage affliction. What of that? It cost me no effort or pang to give. But I think from this day I am about to enter a better frame of mind, to prepare myself for reunion with Frank. You see I

still think of Frank more than of God; and unless it be counted that in thus loving the creature so much, so long, and so exclusively, I have not at least blasphemed the Creator, small is my chance of salvation. What do you think, Lucy, of these things? Be my chaplain, and tell me."

This question I could not answer: I had no words. It seemed as if she thought I *had* answered it.

"Very right, my child. We should acknowledge God merciful, but not always for us comprehensible. We should accept our own lot, whatever it be, and try to render happy that of others. Should we not? Well, to-morrow I will begin by trying to make you happy. I will endeavour to do something for you, Lucy: something that will benefit you when I am dead. My head aches now with talking too much; still I am happy. Go to bed. The clock strikes two. How late you sit up; or rather how late I, in my selfishness, keep you up. But go now; have no more anxiety for me: I feel I shall rest well."

She composed herself as if to slumber. I, too, retired to my crib in a closet within her room. The night passed in quietness; quietly her doom must at last have come: peacefully and painlessly: in the morning she was found without life, nearly cold, but all calm and undisturbed. Her previous excitement of spirits and change of mood had been the prelude of a fit; one stroke sufficed to sever the thread of an existence so long fretted by affliction.

CHAPTER V.

TURNING A NEW LEAF.

My mistress being dead, and I once more alone, I had to look out for a new place. About this time I might be a little—a very little—shaken in nerves. I grant I was not looking well, but on the contrary, thin, haggard, and hollow-eyed; like a sitter up at night, like an overwrought servant, or a placeless person in debt. In debt, however, I was not; nor quite poor; for though Miss Marchmont had not had time to benefit me, as, on that last night, she said she intended, yet, after the funeral, my wages were duly paid by her second cousin, the heir, an avaricious-looking man, with pinched nose and narrow temples, who, indeed, I heard long afterwards, turned out a thorough miser: a direct contrast to his generous kinswoman, and a foil to her memory, blessed to this day by the poor and needy. The possessor, then, of fifteen pounds; of health, though worn, not broken, and of a spirit in similar condition; I might still, in comparison with many people, be regarded as occupying an enviable

position. An embarrassing one it was, however, at the same time; as I felt with some acuteness on a certain day, of which the corresponding one in the next week was to see my departure from my present abode, while with another I was not provided.

In this dilemma I went, as a last and sole resource, to see and consult an old servant of our family; once my nurse, now housekeeper at a grand mansion not far from Miss Marchmont's. I spent some hours with her; she comforted, but knew not how to advise me. Still in inward darkness, I left her about twilight; a walk of two miles lay before me; it was a clear, frosty night. In spite of my solitude, my poverty, and my perplexity, my heart, nourished and nerved with the vigour of a youth that had not yet counted twenty-three summers, beat light and not feebly. Not feebly, I am sure, or I should have trembled in that lonely walk, which lay through still fields, and passed neither village, nor farmhouse, nor cottage; I should have quailed in the absence of moonlight, for it was by the leading of stars only I traced the dim path; I should have quailed still more in the unwonted presence of that which to-night shone in the north, a moving mystery—the Aurora Borealis. But this solemn stranger influenced me otherwise than through my fears. Some new power it seemed to bring. I drew in energy with the keen, low breeze that blew on its path. A bold thought was sent to my mind; my mind was made strong to receive it.

"Leave this wilderness," it was said to me, "and go out hence."

"Where?" was the query.

I had not very far to look; gazing from this country parish in that flat, rich middle of England—I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes; I saw London.

The next day I returned to the hall, and asking once more to see the housekeeper, I communicated to her my plan.

Mrs. Barrett was a grave, judicious woman, though she knew little more of the world than myself; but grave and judicious as she was, she did not charge me with being out of my senses: and, indeed, I had a staid manner of my own which ere now had been as good to me as cloak and hood of hodden grey; since under its favour I had been enabled to achieve with impunity, and even approbation, deeds that, if attempted with an excited and unsettled air, would in some minds have stamped me as a dreamer and zealot.

The housekeeper was slowly propounding some difficulties, while she prepared orange-rind for marmalade, when a child ran past the window and came bounding into the room. It was a pretty child, and as it danced, laughing, up to me—for we were not strangers (nor, indeed, was its mother—a young married daughter of the house—a stranger)—I took it on my knee. Different as were our social positions now, this child's mother and I had been

school-fellows, when I was a girl of ten and she a lady of sixteen ; and I remembered her—good looking, but dull—in a lower class than mine.

I was admiring the boy's handsome dark eyes, when the mother, young Mrs. Leigh, entered. What a beautiful and kind-looking woman was the good-natured and comely, but unintellectual girl become ! Wifehood and maternity had changed her thus, as I have since seen them change others even less promising than she. Me, she had forgotten. I was changed, too, though not, I fear, for the better. I made no attempt to recall myself to her memory; why should I? She came for her son to accompany her in a walk, and behind her followed a nurse, carrying an infant. I only mention the incident because, in addressing the nurse, Mrs. Leigh spoke French (very bad French by the way, and with an incorrigibly bad accent, again forcibly reminding me of our school-days); and I found the woman was a foreigner. The little boy chattered volubly in French too. When the whole party were withdrawn, Mrs. Barrett remarked that her young lady had brought that foreign nurse home with her two years ago, on her return from a Continental excursion ; that she was treated almost as well as a governess, and had nothing to do but walk out with the baby and chatter French with Master Charles ; "and," added Mrs. Barrett, "she says there are many Englishwomen in foreign families as well placed as she."

I stored up this piece of casual information, as careful housewives store seemingly worthless shreds and fragments for which their prescient minds anticipate a possible use some day. Before I left my old friend, she gave me the address of a respectable old-fashioned inn in the city, which, she said, my uncles used to frequent in former days.

In going to London, I ran less risk and evinced less enterprise than the reader may think. In fact, the distance was only fifty miles. My means would suffice both to take me there, to keep me a few days, and also to bring me back if I found no inducement to stay. I regarded it as a brief holiday, permitted for once to work-weary faculties, rather than as an adventure of life and death. There is nothing like taking all you do at a moderate estimate; it keeps mind and body tranquil; whereas grandiloquent notions are apt to hurry both into fever.

Fifty miles were then a day's journey (for I speak of a time gone by; my hair, which, till a late period, withstood the frosts of time, lies now, at last white, under a white cap, like snow beneath snow). About nine o'clock of a wet February night I reached London.

My reader, I know, is one who would not thank me for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impressions; and it is well, inasmuch as I had neither time nor mood to cherish such; arriving as I did late, on a dark, raw, and rainy evening, in a

Babylon and a wilderness, of which the vastness and the strangeness tried to the utmost any powers of clear thought and steady self-possession with which, in the absence of more brilliant faculties, Nature might have gifted me.

When I left the coach, the strange speech of the cabmen and others waiting round, seemed to me odd as a foreign tongue. I had never before heard the English language chopped up in that way. However, I managed to understand and to be understood, so far as to get myself and trunk safely conveyed to the old inn whereof I had the address. How difficult, how oppressive, how puzzling seemed my flight! In London for the first time; at an inn for the first time; tired with travelling; confused with darkness; palsied with cold; unfurnished with either experience or advice to tell me how to act, and yet—to act obliged.

Into the hands of common-sense I confided the matter. Common-sense, however, was as chilled and bewildered as all my other faculties, and it was only under the spur of an inexorable necessity that she spasmodically executed her trust. Thus urged she paid the porter: considering the crisis, I did not blame her too much that she was hugely cheated; she asked the waiter for a room; she timorously called for the chambermaid; what is far more, she bore, without being wholly overcome, a highly supercilious style of demeanour from that young lady, when she appeared.

I recollect this same chambermaid was a pattern of town prettiness and smartness. So trim her waist, her cap, her dress—I wondered how they had all been manufactured. Her speech had an accent which in its mincing glibness seemed to rebuke mine as by authority; her spruce attire flaunted an easy scorn to my plain country garb.

"Well, it can't be helped," I thought, "and then the scene is new, and the circumstances; I shall gain good."

Maintaining a very quiet manner towards this arrogant little maid, and subsequently observing the same towards the parsonic-looking, black-coated, white-neckclothed waiter, I got civility from them ere long. I believe at first they thought I was a servant; but in a little while they changed their minds, and hovered in a doubtful state between patronage and politeness.

I kept up well till I had partaken of some refreshment, warmed myself by a fire, and was fairly shut into my own room; but, as I sat down by the bed and rested my head and arms on the pillow, a terrible oppression overcame me. All at once my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous, desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. What was I doing here alone in great London? What should I do on the morrow? What prospects had I in life? What friends had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?

I wet the pillow, my arms, and my hair, with rushing tears. A dark interval of most bitter thought followed this burst; but I did not regret the step taken, nor wish to retract it. A strong, vague persuasion that it was better to go forward than backward, and that I *could* go forward—that a way, however narrow and difficult, would in time open—predominated over other feelings: its influence hushed them so far, that at last I became sufficiently tranquil to be able to say my prayers and seek my couch. I had just extinguished my candle and lain down, when a deep, low, mighty tone swung through the night. At first I knew it not; but it was uttered twelve times, and at the twelfth colossal hum and trembling knell, I said: "I lie in the shadow of St. Paul's."

CHAPTER VI.

LONDON.

THE next day was the first of March, and when I awoke, rose, and opened my curtain, I saw the risen sun struggling through fog. Above my head, above the housetops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orbed mass, dark-blue and dim—THE DOME. While I looked, my inner self moved; my spirit shook its always-fettered wings half loose; I had a sudden feeling as if I, who never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life. In that morning my soul grew as fast as Jonah's gourd.

"I did well to come," I said, proceeding to dress with speed and care. "I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets, and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?"

Being dressed I went down; not travel-worn and exhausted, but tidy and refreshed. When the waiter came in with my breakfast, I managed to

accost him sedately, yet cheerfully; we had ten minutes' discourse, in the course of which we became usefully known to each other.

He was a grey-haired, elderly man; and, it seemed, had lived in his present place twenty years. Having ascertained this, I was sure he must remember my two uncles, Charles and Wilmot, who, fifteen years ago, were frequent visitors here. I mentioned their names; he recalled them perfectly, and with respect. Having intimated my connection, my position in his eyes was henceforth clear, and on a right footing. He said I was like my uncle Charles: I suppose he spoke truth, because Mrs. Barrett was accustomed to say the same thing. A ready and obliging courtesy now replaced his former uncomfortably doubtful manner; henceforth I need no longer be at a loss for a civil answer to a sensible question.

The street on which my little sitting-room window looked was narrow, perfectly quiet, and not dirty: the few passengers were just such as one sees in provincial towns: here was nothing formidable: I felt sure I might venture out alone.

Having breakfasted, out I went. Elation and pleasure were in my heart: to walk alone in London seemed of itself an adventure. Presently I found myself in Paternoster Row—classic ground this. I entered a bookseller's shop, kept by one Jones; I bought a little book—a piece of extravagance I could ill-afford; but I thought I would one day

give or send it to Mrs. Barrett. Mr. Jones, a dried-in man of business, stood behind his desk; he seemed one of the greatest, and I one of the happiest of beings.

Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning. Finding myself before St. Paul's, I went in; I mounted to the dome: I saw thence London with its river, and its bridges, and its churches; I saw antique Westminster, and the green Temple Gardens, with sun upon them, and a glad, blue sky, of early spring, above; and, between them and it, not too dense a cloud of haze.

Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment: and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps, an irrational, but a real pleasure. Since those days, I have seen the West End, the parks, the fine squares; but I love the City far better. The City seems so much more in earnest: its business, its rush, its roar, are such serious things, sights, and sounds. The city is getting its living—the West End but enjoys its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the City you are deeply excited.

Faint, at last, and hungry (it was years since I

had felt such healthy hunger), I returned, about two o'clock, to my dark, old, and quiet inn. I dined on two dishes—a plain joint, and vegetables; both seemed excellent: how much better than the small, dainty messes Miss Marchmont's cook used to send up to my kind, dead mistress and me, and to the discussion of which we could not bring half an appetite between us! Delightfully tired, I lay down on three chairs for an hour (the room did not boast a sofa). I slept, then I woke and thought for two hours.

My state of mind, and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute, and daring—perhaps desperate—line of action. I had nothing to lose. Unutterable loathing of a desolate existence past, forbade return. If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would suffer? If I died far away from—home I was going to say, but I had no home—from England, then, who would weep?

I might suffer; I was inured to suffering: death itself had not, I thought, those terrors for me which it has for the softly reared. I had, ere this, looked on the thought of death with a quiet eye. Prepared, then, for any consequences, I formed a project.

That same evening I obtained from my friend, the waiter, information respecting the sailing of vessels for a certain continental port, Boue-Marine. No time, I found, was to be lost: that very night

I must take my berth. I might, indeed, have waited till the morning before going on board, but would not run the risk of being too late.

"Better take your berth at once, ma'am," counselled the waiter. I agreed with him, and having discharged my bill, and acknowledged my friend's services at a rate which I now know was princely, and which in his eyes must have seemed absurd—and indeed, while pocketing the cash, he smiled a faint smile which intimated his opinion of the donor's *savoir-faire*—he proceeded to call a coach. To the driver he also recommended me, giving at the same time an injunction about taking me, I think, to the wharf, and not leaving me to the watermen; which that functionary promised to observe, but failed in keeping his promise: on the contrary, he offered me up as an oblation, served me as a dripping roast, making me alight in the midst of a throng of watermen.

This was an uncomfortable crisis. It was a dark night. The coachman instantly drove off as soon as he had got his fare; the watermen commenced a struggle for me and my trunk. Their oaths I hear at this moment: they shook my philosophy more than did the night, or the isolation, or the strangeness of the scene. One laid hands on my trunk. I looked on and waited quietly; but when another laid hands on me, I spoke up, shook off his touch, stepped at once into a boat, desired austerely that the trunk should be placed beside me—"Just

there,"—which was instantly done ; for the owner of the boat I had chosen became now an ally : I was rowed off.

Black was the river as a torrent of ink ; lights glanced on it from the piles of building round, ships rocked on its bosom. They rowed me up to several vessels ; I read by lantern-light their names painted in great, white letters on a dark ground. *The Ocean, The Phœnix, The Consort, The Dolphin,* were passed in turns ; but *The Vivid* was my ship, and it seemed she lay further down.

Down the sable flood we glided ; I thought of the Styx, and of Charon rowing some solitary soul to the Land of Shades. Amidst the strange scene, with a chilly wind blowing in my face and midnight-clouds dropping rain above my head ; with two rude rowers for companions, whose insane oaths still tortured my ear, I asked myself if I was wretched or terrified. I was neither. Often in my life have I been far more so under comparatively safe circumstances. "How is this ?" said I. "Methinks I am animated and alert, instead of being depressed and apprehensive !" I could not tell how it was.

The Vivid started out, white and glaring, from the black night at last. "Here you are !" said the waterman, and instantly demanded six shillings.

"You ask too much," I said. He drew off from the vessel and swore he would not embark me till I paid it. A young man, the steward as I found afterwards, was looking over the ship's side ; he

grinned a smile in anticipation of the coming contest; to disappoint him, I paid the money. Three times that afternoon I had given crowns where I should have given shillings; but I consoled myself with the reflection, "It is the price of experience."

"They've cheated you!" said the steward exultingly when I got on board. I answered phlegmatically that "I knew it," and went below.

A stout, handsome, and showy woman was in the ladies' cabin. I asked to be shown my berth; she looked hard at me, muttered something about its being unusual for passengers to come on board at that hour, and seemed disposed to be less than civil. What a face she had—so comely—so insolent and so selfish!

"Now that I am on board, I shall certainly stay here," was my answer, "I will trouble you to show me my berth."

She complied, but sullenly. I took off my bonnet, arranged my things, and lay down. Some difficulties had been passed through; a sort of victory was won: my homeless, anchorless, unsupported mind had again leisure for a brief repose. Till the *Vivid* arrived in harbour, no further action would be required of me; but then. . . Oh! I could not look forward. Harassed, exhausted, I lay in a half-trance.

The stewardess talked all night; not to me but to the young steward, her son and her very picture.

He passed in and out of the cabin continually: they disputed, they quarrelled, they made it up again twenty times in the course of the night. She professed to be writing a letter home—she said to her father; she read passages of it aloud, heeding me no more than a stock—perhaps she believed me asleep. Several of these passages appeared to comprise family secrets, and bore special reference to one "Charlotte," a younger sister, who, from the bearing of the epistle, seemed to be on the brink of perpetrating a romantic and imprudent match; loud was the protest of this elder lady against the distasteful union. The dutiful son laughed his mother's correspondence to scorn. She defended it, and raved at him. They were a strange pair. She might be thirty-nine or forty, and was buxom and blooming as a girl of twenty. Hard, loud, vain and vulgar, her mind and body alike seemed brazen and imperishable. I should think, from her childhood, she must have lived in public stations; and in her youth might very likely have been a barmaid.

Towards morning her discourse ran on a new theme: "the Watsons," a certain expected family-party of passengers, known to her, it appeared, and by her much esteemed on account of the handsome profit realized in their fees. She said, "It was as good as a little fortune to her whenever this family crossed."

At dawn all were astir, and by sunrise the passengers came on board. Boisterous was the

welcome given by the stewardess to "the Watsons," and great was the bustle made in their honour. They were four in number, two males and two females. Besides them, there was but one other passenger—a young lady, whom a gentlemanly, though languid-looking man escorted. The two groups offered a marked contrast. The Watsons were doubtless rich people, for they had the confidence of conscious wealth in their bearing; the women—youthful both of them, and one perfectly handsome, as far as physical beauty went—were dressed richly, gaily, and absurdly out of character for the circumstances. Their bonnets with bright flowers, their velvet cloaks and silk dresses, seemed better suited for park or promenade than for a damp packet-deck. The men were of low stature, plain, fat, and vulgar; the oldest, plainest, greasiest, broadest, I soon found was the husband—the bridegroom, I suppose, for she was very young—of the beautiful girl. Deep was my amazement at this discovery; and deeper still when I perceived that, instead of being desperately wretched in such a union, she was gay even to giddiness. "Her laughter," I reflected, "must be the mere frenzy of despair." And even while this thought was crossing my mind, as I stood leaning quiet and solitary against the ship's side, she came tripping up to me, an utter stranger, with a camp-stool in her hand, and smiling a smile of which the levity puzzled and startled me, though it showed a perfect set of

perfect teeth, she offered me the accommodation of this piece of furniture. I declined it, of course, with all the courtesy I could put into my manner: she danced off heedless and lightsome. She must have been good-natured; but what had made her marry that individual, who was at least as much like an oil-barrel as a man?

The other lady-passenger, with the gentleman-companion, was quite a girl, pretty and fair: her simple print dress, untrimmed straw-bonnet and large shawl, gracefully worn, formed a costume plain to quakerism: yet, for her, becoming enough. Before the gentleman quitted her, I observed him throwing a glance of scrutiny over all the passengers, as if to ascertain in what company his charge would be left. With a most dissatisfied air did his eye turn from the ladies with the gay flowers; he looked at me, and then he spoke to his daughter, niece, or whatever she was: she also glanced in my direction, and slightly curled her short, pretty lip. It might be myself, or it might be my homely mourning habit, that elicited this mark of contempt; more likely, both. A bell rang; her father (I afterwards knew that it was her father) kissed her, and returned to land. The packet sailed.

Foreigners say that it is only English girls who can thus be trusted to travel alone, and deep is their wonder at the daring confidence of English parents and guardians. As for the "jeunes Miss," by some their intrepidity is pronounced masculine

and "inconvenant," others regard them as the passive victims of an educational and theological system which wantonly dispenses with proper "surveillance." Whether this particular young lady was of the sort that can the most safely be left unwatched, I do not know: or rather did not *then* know; but it soon appeared that the dignity of solitude was not to her taste. She paced the deck once or twice backwards and forwards; she looked with a little sour air of disdain at the flaunting silks and velvets, and the bears which thereon danced attendance, and eventually she approached me and spoke.

"Are you fond of a sea-voyage?" was her question.

I explained that my *fondness* for a sea-voyage had yet to undergo the test of experience; I had never made one.

"Oh, how charming!" cried she. "I quite envy you the novelty: first impressions, you know, are so pleasant. Now I have made so many, I quite forget the first: I am quite *blasée* about the sea and all that."

I could not help smiling.

"Why do you laugh at me?" she inquired, with a frank testiness that pleased me better than her other talk.

"Because you are so young to be *blasée* about anything."

"I am seventeen" (a little piqued).

"You hardly look sixteen. Do you like travelling alone?"

"Bah! I care nothing about it. I have crossed the Channel ten times, alone; but then I take care never to be long alone: I always make friends."

"You will scarcely make many friends this voyage, I think" (glancing at the Watson-group, who were now laughing and making a great deal of noise on deck).

"Not of those odious men and women," said she: "such people should be steerage passengers. Are you going to school?"

"No."

"Where are you going?"

"I have not the least idea—beyond, at least, the Port of Boue-Marine."

She stared, then carelessly ran on:

"I am going to school. Oh, the number of foreign schools I have been at in my life! And yet I am quite an ignoramus. I know nothing—nothing in the world—I assure you; except that I play and dance beautifully,—and French and German of course I know, to speak; but I can't read or write them very well. Do you know they wanted me to translate a page of an easy German book into English the other day, and I couldn't do it. Papa was so mortified; he says it looks as if M. de Bassompierre—my godpapa, who pays all my school-bills—had thrown away all his money. And then, in matters of information—in history, geography,

arithmetic, and so on, I am quite a baby; and I write English so badly—such spelling and grammar, they tell me. Into the bargain I have quite forgotten my religion: they call me a Protestant, you know, but really I am not sure whether I am or not. I don't well know the difference between Romanism and Protestantism. However, I don't in the least care for that. I was a Lutheran once at Bonn—dear Bonn!—charming Bonn!—where there were so many handsome students. Every nice girl in our school had an admirer; they knew our hours for walking out, and almost always passed us on the promenade: 'Schönes Mädchen,' we used to hear them say. I was excessively happy at Bonn!"

"And where are you now?" I inquired.

"Oh! at——*chose*," said she.

Now, Miss Ginevra Fanshawe (such was this young person's name) only substituted this word "*chose*" in temporary oblivion of the real name. It was a habit she had: "*chose*" came in at every turn in her conversation—the convenient substitute for any missing word in any language she might chance at the time to be speaking. French girls often do the like; from them she had caught the custom. "*Chose*," however, I found in this instance, stood for Villette—the great capital of the great kingdom of Labassecour.

"Do you like Villette?" I asked.

"Pretty well. The natives, you know, are

intensely stupid and vulgar; but there are some nice English families."

"Are you in a school?"

"Yes."

"A good one?"

"Oh no! horrid; but I go out every Sunday, and care nothing about the *maîtresses* or the *professeurs*, or the *élèves*, and send lessons *au diable* (one daren't say that in English, you know, but it sounds quite right in French); and thus I get on charmingly. . . . You are laughing at me again?"

"No—I am only smiling at my own thoughts."

"What are they?" (without waiting for an answer)—"Now, *do* tell me where you are going."

"Where Fate may lead me. My business is to earn a living where I can find it."

"To earn!" (in consternation). "Are you poor, then?"

"As poor as Job."

(After a pause) "Bah! how unpleasant! But *I* know what it is to be poor: they are poor enough at home—papa and mamma, and all of them. Papa is called Captain Fanshawe: he is an officer on half-pay, but well descended, and some of our connections are great enough; but, my uncle and godpapa De Bassompierre, who lives in France, is the only one that helps us: he educates us girls. I have five sisters and three brothers. By-and-by we are to marry—rather elderly gentlemen I suppose, with

cash: papa and mamma manage that. My sister Augusta is married now to a man much older-looking than papa. Augusta is very beautiful—not in my style—but dark; her husband, Mr. Davies, had the yellow fever in India, and he is still the colour of a guinea; but then he is rich, and Augusta has her carriage and establishment, and we all think she has done perfectly well. Now, this is better than 'earning a living,' as you say. By the way, are you clever?"

"No—not at all."

"You can play, sing, speak three or four languages?"

"By no means."

"Still I think you are clever" (a pause and a yawn).

"Shall you be sea-sick?"

"Shall you?"

"Oh, immensely; as soon as ever we get in sight of the sea: I begin, indeed, to feel it already. I shall go below; and won't I order about that fat odious stewardess! Heureusement je sais faire aller mon monde." Down she went.

It was not long before the other passengers followed her: throughout the afternoon I remained on deck alone. When I recall the tranquil, and even happy mood in which I passed those hours, and remember, at the same time, the position in which I was placed; its hazardous—some would have said its hopeless—character; I feel that, as—

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars—a cage,"

so peril, loneliness, an uncertain future, are not oppressive evils, so long as the frame is healthy, and the faculties are employed; so long, especially, as Liberty lends us her wings, and Hope guides us by her star.

I was not sick till long after we passed Margate, and deep was the pleasure I drank in with the sea breeze; divine the delight I drew from the heaving Channel waves, from the sea-birds on their ridges, from the white sails on their dark distance, from the quiet yet beclouded sky, overhanging all. In my reverie, methought I saw the continent of Europe, like a wide dreamland, far away. Sunshine lay on it, making the long coast one line of gold; tiniest tracery of clustered town and snow-gleaming tower, of woods deep massed, of heights serrated, of smooth pasturage and veiny stream, embossed the metal-bright prospect. For background, spread a sky, solemn and dark blue, and—grand with imperial promise, soft with tints of enchantment—strode from north to south a God-bent bow, an arch of hope.

Cancel the whole of that, if you please, reader—or rather let it stand, and draw thence a moral—an alliterative, text-hand copy—

"Day-dreams are delusions of the demon."

Becoming excessively sick, I faltered down into the cabin.

Miss Fanshawe's berth chanced to be next mine; and, I am sorry to say, she tormented me with an unsparing selfishness during the whole time of our mutual distress. Nothing could exceed her impatience and fretfulness. The Watsons, who were very sick too, and on whom the stewardess attended with shameless partiality, were stoics compared with her. Many a time since have I noticed in persons of Ginevra Fanshawe's light, careless temperament, and fair, fragile style of beauty, an entire incapacity to endure: they seem to sour in adversity, like small beer in thunder. The man who takes such a woman for his wife, ought to be prepared to guarantee her an existence all sunshine. Indignant at last with her teasing peevishness, I curtly requested her "to hold her tongue." The rebuff did her good, and it was observable that she liked me no worse for it.

As dark night drew on, the sea roughened: larger waves swayed strong against the vessel's side. It was strange to reflect that blackness and water were round us, and to feel the ship ploughing straight on her pathless way, despite noise, billow, and rising gale. Articles of furniture began to fall about, and it became needful to lash them to their places; the passengers grew sicker than ever: Miss Fanshawe declared, with groans, that she must die.

"Not just yet, honey," said the stewardess. "We're just in port." Accordingly, in another

quarter of an hour, a calm fell upon us all ; and about midnight the voyage ended.

I was sorry : yes, I was sorry. My resting-time was past ; my difficulties—my stringent difficulties —recommenced. When I went on deck, the cold air and black scowl of the night seemed to rebuke me for my presumption in being where I was : the lights of the foreign seaport town, glimmering round the foreign harbour, met me like unnumbered threatening eyes. Friends came on board to welcome the Watsons ; a whole family of friends surrounded and bore away Miss Fanshawe ; I—— but I dared not for one moment dwell on a comparison of positions.

Yet where should I go? I must go somewhere. Necessity dare not be nice. As I gave the stewardess her fee—and she seemed surprised at receiving a coin of more value than, from such a quarter, her coarse calculations had probably reckoned on—I said,—

"Be kind enough to direct me to some quiet, respectable inn, where I can go for the night."

She not only gave me the required direction, but called a commissionaire, and bid him take charge of me, and—*not* my trunk, for that was gone to the custom-house.

I followed this man along a rudely-paved street, lit now by a fitful gleam of moonlight ; he brought me to the inn. I offered him sixpence, which he refused to take ; supposing it was not enough, I

changed it for a shilling; but this also he declined, speaking rather sharply, in a language to me unknown. A waiter, coming forward into the lamp-lit inn-passage, reminded me, in broken English, that my money was foreign money, not current here. I gave him a sovereign to change. This little matter settled, I asked for a bedroom; supper I could not take: I was still sea-sick and unnerved, and trembling all over. How deeply glad I was when the door of a very small chamber at length closed on me and my exhaustion. Again I might rest: though the cloud of doubt would be as thick to-morrow as ever; the necessity for exertion more urgent, the peril (of destitution) nearer, the conflict (for existence) more severe.

CHAPTER VII.

VILLETTE.

I AWOKE next morning with courage revived and spirits refreshed: physical debility no longer enervated my judgment; my mind felt prompt and clear.

Just as I finished dressing, a tap came to the door; I said, "Come in," expecting the chambermaid, whereas a rough man walked in and said,—

"Gif me your keys, Meess."

"Why?" I asked.

"Gif!" said he impatiently; and as he half-snatched them from my hand, he added, "All right! haf your tronc soon."

Fortunately it did turn out all right: he was from the custom-house. Where to go to get some breakfast I could not tell; but I proceeded, not without hesitation, to descend.

I now observed, what I had not noticed in my extreme weariness last night, viz. that this inn was, in fact, a large hotel; and as I slowly descended the broad staircase, halting on each step (for I was

in wonderfully little haste to get down), I gazed at the high ceiling above me, at the painted walls around, at the wide windows which filled the house with light, at the veined marble I trod (for the steps were all of marble, though uncarpeted and not very clean), and contrasting all this with the dimensions of the closet assigned to me as a chamber, with the extreme modesty of its appointments, I fell into a philosophizing mood.

Much I marvelled at the sagacity evinced by waiters and chambermaids in proportioning the accommodation to the guest. How could inn-servants and ship-stewardesses everywhere tell at a glance that I, for instance, was an individual of no social significance and little burdened by cash? They *did* know it evidently: I saw quite well that they all, in a moment's calculation, estimated me at about the same fractional value. The fact seemed to me curious and pregnant: I would not disguise from myself what it indicated, yet managed to keep up my spirits pretty well under its pressure.

Having at last landed in a great hall, full of sky-light glare, I made my way somehow to what proved to be the coffee-room. It cannot be denied that on entering this room I trembled somewhat; felt uncertain, solitary, wretched; wished to Heaven I knew whether I was doing right or wrong; felt convinced that it was the last, but could not help myself. Acting in the spirit and with the calm of a fatalist, I sat down at a small table, to which a

waiter presently brought me some breakfast; and I partook of that meal in a frame of mind not greatly calculated to favour digestion. There were many other people breakfasting at other tables in the room; I should have felt rather more happy if amongst them all I could have seen any women; however, there was not one—all present were men. But nobody seemed to think I was doing anything strange; one or two gentlemen glanced at me occasionally, but none stared obtrusively: I suppose if there was anything eccentric in the business, they accounted for it by this word "Anglaise!"

Breakfast over, I must again move—in what direction? "Go to Villette," said an inward voice; prompted doubtless by the recollection of this slight sentence uttered carelessly and at random by Miss Fanshawe, as she bid me good-bye:

"I wish you would come to Madame Beck's; she has some marmots whom you might look after: she wants an English gouvernante, or was wanting one two months ago."

Who Madame Beck was, where she lived, I knew not; I had asked, but the question passed unheard; Miss Fanshawe, hurried away by her friends, left it unanswered. I presumed Villette to be her residence—to Villette I would go. The distance was forty miles. I knew I was catching at straws: but in the wide and weltering deep where I found myself, I would have caught at cobwebs. Having

inquired about the means of travelling to Villette, and secured a seat in the diligence, I departed on the strength of this outline—this shadow of a project. Before you pronounce on the rashness of the proceeding, reader, look back to the point whence I started; consider the desert I had left, note how little I perilled: mine was the game where the player cannot lose and may win.

Of an artistic temperament, I deny that I am; yet I must possess something of the artist's faculty of making the most of present pleasure: that is to say, when it is of the kind to my taste. I enjoyed that day, though we travelled slowly, though it was cold, though it rained. Somewhat bare, flat, and treeless was the route along which our journey lay; and slimy canals crept, like half-torpid green snakes beside the road; and formal pollard willows edged level fields, tilled like kitchen-garden beds. The sky, too, was monotonously grey; the atmosphere was stagnant and humid; yet amidst all these deadening influences, my fancy budded fresh, and my heart basked in sunshine. These feelings, however, were well kept in check by the secret but ceaseless consciousness of anxiety lying in wait on enjoyment, like a tiger crouched in a jungle. The breathing of that beast of prey was in my ears always, his fierce heart panted close against mine; he never stirred in his lair but I felt him: I knew he waited only for sundown to bound ravenous from his ambush.

I had hoped we might reach Villette ere night set in, and that thus I might escape the deeper embarrassment which obscurity seems to throw round a first arrival at an unknown bourn; but, what with our slow progress and long stoppages—what with a thick fog and small, dense rain—darkness, that might almost be felt, had settled on the city by the time we gained its suburbs.

I know we passed through a gate where soldiers were stationed—so much I could see by lamplight; then, having left behind us the miry Chaussée, we rattled over a pavement of strangely rough and flinty surface. At a bureau the diligence stopped and the passengers alighted. My first business was to get my trunk: a small matter enough, but important to me. Understanding that it was best not to be importunate or over-eager about luggage, but to wait and watch quietly the delivery of other boxes till I saw my own, and then promptly claim and secure it, I stood apart; my eye fixed on that part of the vehicle in which I had seen my little portmanteau safely stowed, and upon which piles of additional bags and boxes were now heaped. One by one, I saw these removed, lowered, and seized on. I was sure mine ought to be by this time visible: it was not, I had tied on the direction card with a piece of green ribbon, that I might know it at a glance: not a fringe or fragment of green was perceptible. Every package was removed; every tin-case and brown paper parcel; the oil-cloth

cover was lifted ; I saw with distinct vision that not an umbrella, cloak, cane, hat-box or band-box remained.

And my portmanteau, with my few clothes and little pocket-book enclasping the remnant of my fifteen pounds, where were they ?

I ask this question now, but I could not ask it then. I could say nothing whatever ; not possessing a phrase of *speaking* French : and it was French, and French only, the whole world seemed now gabbling around me. *What* should I do? Approaching the conductor, I just laid my hand on his arm, pointed to a trunk, thence to the diligence-roof, and tried to express a question with my eyes. He misunderstood me, seized the trunk indicated, and was about to hoist it on the vehicle.

"Let that alone—will you !" said a voice in good English ; then, in correction, "Qu' est ce que vous faites donc ? Cette malle est à moi."

But I had heard the Fatherland accents ; they rejoiced my heart ; I turned :

"Sir," said I, appealing to the stranger, without, in my distress, noticing what he was like, "I cannot speak French. May I entreat you to ask this man what he has done with my trunk ?"

Without discriminating, for the moment, what sort of face it was to which my eyes were raised and on which they were fixed, I felt in its expression half-surprise at my appeal and half-doubt of the wisdom of interference.

"*Do* ask him; I would do as much for you," said I.

I don't know whether he smiled, but he said in a gentlemanly tone; that is to say, a tone not hard nor terrifying,—

"What sort of trunk was yours?"

I described it, including in my description the green ribbon. And forthwith he took the conductor under hand, and I felt, through all the storm of French which followed, that he raked him fore and aft. Presently he returned to me.

"The fellow avers he was overloaded, and confesses that he removed your trunk after you saw it put on, and has left it behind at Boue-Marine with other parcels; he has promised, however, to forward it to-morrow; the day after, therefore, you will find it safe at this bureau."

"Thank you," said I: but my heart sank.

Meantime what should I do? Perhaps this English gentleman saw the failure of courage in my face; he inquired kindly,—

"Have you any friends in this city?"

"No, and I don't know where to go."

There was a little pause, in the course of which, as he turned more fully to the light of a lamp above him, I saw that he was a young, distinguished, and handsome man; he might be a lord, for anything I knew: Nature had made him good enough for a prince, I thought. His face was very pleasant; he looked high but not arrogant, manly but not over-

bearing. I was turning away, in the deep consciousness of all absence of claim to look for further help from such a one as he.

"Was all your money in your trunk?" he asked, stopping me.

How thankful was I to be able to answer with truth,—

"No. I have enough in my purse" (for I had near twenty francs) "to keep me at a quiet inn till the day after to-morrow: but I am quite a stranger in Villette, and don't know the streets and the inns."

"I can give you the address of such an inn as you want," said he; "and it is not far off: with my direction you will easily find it."

He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few words and gave it to me. I *did* think him kind; and as to distrusting him, or his advice, or his address, I should almost as soon have thought of distrusting the Bible. There was goodness in his countenance, and honour in his bright eyes.

"Your shortest way will be to follow the Boulevard and cross the park," he continued; "but it is too late and too dark for a woman to go through the park alone; I will step with you thus far."

He moved on, and I followed him, through the darkness and the small soaking rain. The Boulevard was all deserted, its path miry, the water dripping from its trees; the park was black as midnight. In the double gloom of trees and fog, I

could not see my guide, I could only follow his tread. Not the least fear had I: I believe I would have foHowed that frank tread, through continual night, to the world's end.

"Now," said he, when the park was traversed, "you will go along this broad street till you come to steps; two lamps will show you where they are: these steps you will descend: a narrower street lies below; following that, at the bottom you will find your inn. They speak English there, so your difficulties are now pretty well over. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," said I: "accept my sincerest thanks." And we parted.

The remembrance of his countenance, which I am sure wore a light not unbenignant to the friendless —the sound in my ear of his voice, which spoke a nature chivalric to the needy and feeble, as well as the youthful and fair—were a sort of cordial to me long after. He was a true young English gentleman.

On I went, hurrying fast through a magnificent street and square, with the grandest houses round, and amidst them the huge outline of more than one overbearing pile; which might be palace or church —I could not tell. Just as I passed a portico, two moustachioed men came suddenly from behind the pillars; they were smoking cigars, their dress implied pretensions to the rank of gentlemen, but, poor things! they were very plebeian in soul. They spoke with insolence, and, fast as I walked,

they kept pace with me a long way. At last I met a sort of patrol, and my dreaded hunters were turned from the pursuit; but they had driven me beyond my reckoning: when I could collect my faculties, I no longer knew where I was; the staircase I must long since have passed. Puzzled, out of breath, all my pulses throbbing in inevitable agitation, I knew not where to turn. It was terrible to think of again encountering those bearded, sneering simpletons: yet the ground must be retraced and the steps sought out.

I came at last to an old and worn flight, and taking it for granted that this must be the one indicated, I descended them. The street into which they led was indeed narrow, but it contained no inn. On I wandered. In a very quiet and comparatively clean and well-paved street, I saw a light burning over the door of a rather large house, loftier by a storey than those round it. *This* might be the inn at last. I hastened on: my knees now trembled under me: I was getting quite exhausted.

No inn was this. A brass-plate embellished the great portecochère: "Pensionnat de Demoiselles" was the inscription: and beneath, a name, "Madame Beck."

I started. About a hundred thoughts volleyed through my mind in a moment. Yet I planned nothing, and considered nothing: I had not time. Providence said, "Stop here; this is *your* inn."

Fate took me in her strong hand; mastered my will; directed my actions: I rang the door-bell.

While I waited, I would not reflect. I fixedly looked at the street-stones, where the door-lamp shone, and counted them and noted their shapes, and the glitter of wet on their angles. I rang again. They opened at last. A bonne in a smart cap stood before me.

"May I see Madame Beck?" I inquired.

I believe if I had spoken French she would not have admitted me; but, as I spoke English, she concluded I was a foreign teacher come on business connected with the pensionnat, and, even at that late hour, she let me in, without a word of reluctance or a moment of hesitation.

The next moment I sat in a cold, glittering salon, with porcelain stove unlit, and gilded ornaments, and polished floor. A pendule on the mantelpiece struck nine o'clock.

A quarter of an hour passed. How fast beat every pulse in my frame! How I turned cold and hot by turns! I sat with my eyes fixed on the door—a great white folding-door, with gilt mouldings: I watched to see a leaf move and open. All had been quiet: not a mouse had stirred; the white doors were closed and motionless.

"You ayre Engliss?" said a voice at my elbow. I almost bounded, so unexpected was the sound; so certain had I been of solitude.

No ghost stood beside me, nor anything of

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spectral aspect; merely a motherly, dumpy little woman, in a large shawl, a wrapping gown, and a clean, trim night-cap.

I said I was English, and immediately, without further prelude, we fell to a most remarkable conversation. Madame Beck (for Madame Beck it was—she had entered by a little door behind me, and, being shod with the shoes of silence, I had heard neither her entrance nor approach)—Madame Beck had exhausted her command of insular speech when she said "You ayre Engliss," and she now proceeded to work away volubly in her own tongue. I answered in mine. She partly understood me, but as I did not at all understand her—though we made together an awful clamour (anything like Madame's gift of utterance I had not hitherto heard or imagined)—we achieved little progress. She rang, ere long, for aid; which arrived in the shape of a "maîtresse," who had been partly educated in an Irish convent, and was esteemed a perfect adept in the English language. A bluff little personage this maîtresse was—Labassecourienne from top to toe: and how she did slaughter the speech of Albion! However, I told her a plain tale, which she translated. I told her how I had left my own country, intent on extending my knowledge, and gaining my bread; how I was ready to turn my hand to any useful thing, provided it was not wrong or degrading; how I would be a child's-nurse, or a lady's-maid, and would not refuse even housework

adapted to my strength. Madame heard this; and, questioning her countenance, I almost thought the tale won her ear:

"Il n'y a que les Anglaises pour ces sortes d'enterprises," said she; "sont-elles donc intrépides ces femmes là!"

She asked my name, my age; she sat and looked at me—not pityingly, not with interest: never a gleam of sympathy, or a shade of compassion, crossed her countenance during the interview. I felt she was not one to be led an inch by her feelings: grave and considerate, she gazed, consulting her judgment and studying my narrative. A bell rang.

"Voilà pour la prière du soir!" said she, and rose. Through her interpreter, she desired me to depart now, and come back on the morrow; but this did not suit me: I could not bear to return to the perils of darkness and the street. With energy, yet with a collected and controlled manner, I said, addressing herself personally, and not the maîtresse:—

"Be assured, Madame, that by instantly securing my services, your interests will be served and not injured: you will find me one who will wish to give, in her labour, a full equivalent for her wages; and if you hire me, it will be better that I should stay here this night: having no acquaintance in Villette, and not possessing the language of the country, how can I secure a lodging?"

"It is true," said she; "but at least you can give a reference?"

"None."

She inquired after my luggage: I told her when it would arrive. She mused. At that moment a man's step was heard in the vestibule, hastily proceeding to the outer door. (I shall go on with this part of my tale as if I had understood all that passed; for though it was then scarce intelligible to me, I heard it translated afterwards.)

"Who goes out now?" demanded Madame Beck, listening to the tread.

"M. Paul," replied the teacher. "He came this evening to give a reading to the first class."

"The very man I should at this moment most wish to see. Call him."

The teacher ran to the salon door. M. Paul was summoned. He entered: a small, dark and spare man, in spectacles.

"Mon cousin," began Madame, "I want your opinion. We know your skill in physiognomy; use it now. Read that countenance."

The little man fixed on me his spectacles. A resolute compression of the lips, and gathering of the brow, seemed to say that he meant to see through me, and that a veil would be no veil for him.

"I read it," he pronounced.

"Et qu'en dites vous?"

"Mais—bien des choses," was the oracular answer.

"Bad or good?"

"Of each kind, without doubt," pursued the diviner.

"May one trust her word?"

"Are you negotiating a matter of importance?"

"She wishes me to engage her as bonne or gouvernante; tells a tale full of integrity, but gives no reference."

"She is a stranger?"

"An Englishwoman, as one may see."

"She speaks French?"

"Not a word."

"She understands it?"

"No."

"One may then speak plainly in her presence?"

"Doubtless."

He gazed steadily. "Do you need her services?"

"I could do with them. You know I am disgusted with Madame Svini."

Still he scrutinized. The judgment, when it at last came, was as indefinite as what had gone before it.

"Engage her. If good predominates in that nature, the action will bring its own reward; if evil —eh bien! ma cousine, ce sera toujours une bonne œuvre." And with a bow and a "bon soir," this vague arbiter of my destiny vanished.

And Madame did engage me that very night—by God's blessing I was spared the necessity of passing forth again into the lonesome, dreary, hostile street.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME BECK.

Being delivered into the charge of the maîtresse, I was led through a long narrow passage into a foreign kitchen, very clean but very strange. It seemed to contain no means of cooking—neither fireplace nor oven; I did not understand that the great black furnace which filled one corner was an efficient substitute for these. Surely pride was not already beginning its whispers in my heart; yet I felt a sense of relief when, instead of being left in the kitchen, as I half anticipated, I was led forward to a small inner room termed a "cabinet." A cook in a jacket, a short petticoat and sabots, brought my supper; to wit—some meat, nature unknown, served in an odd and acid, but pleasant sauce; some chopped potatoes, made savory with, I know not what: vinegar and sugar, I think: a tartine, or slice of bread-and-butter, and a baked pear. Being hungry, I ate and was grateful.

After the "Prière du Soir," Madame herself came to have another look at me. She desired me to

follow her upstairs. Through a series of the queerest little dormitories—which, I heard afterwards, had once been nuns' cells: for the premises were in part of ancient date—and through the oratory—a long, low, gloomy room, where a crucifix hung, pale, against the wall, and two tapers kept dim vigils—she conducted me to an apartment where three children were asleep in three tiny beds. A heated stove made the air of this room oppressive; and, to mend matters, it was scented with an odour rather strong than delicate: a perfume, indeed, altogether surprising and unexpected under the circumstances, being like the combination of smoke with some spirituous essence—a smell, in short, of whisky.

Beside a table, on which flared the remnant of a candle guttering to waste in the socket, a coarse woman, heterogeneously clad in a broad striped showy silk dress and a stuff apron, sat in a chair fast asleep. To complete the picture, and leave no doubt as to the state of matters, a bottle and an empty glass stood at the sleeping beauty's elbow.

Madame contemplated this remarkable tableau with great calm; she neither smiled nor scowled; no impress of anger, disgust, or surprise, ruffled the equality of her grave aspect; she did not even wake the woman. Serenely pointing to a fourth bed, she intimated that it was to be mine; then, having extinguished the candle and substituted for it a night-lamp, she glided through an inner door, which

she left ajar—the entrance to her own chamber, a large, well-furnished apartment; as was discernible through the aperture.

My devotions that night were all thanksgiving. Strangely had I been led since morning—unexpectedly had I been provided for. Scarcely could I believe that not forty-eight hours had elapsed since I left London, under no other guardianship than that which protects the passenger-bird—with no prospect but the dubious cloud-tracery of hope.

I was a light sleeper; in the dead of night I suddenly awoke. All was hushed, but a white figure stood in the room—Madame in her night-dress. Moving without perceptible sound, she visited the three children in the three beds; she approached me: I feigned sleep, and she studied me long. A small pantomime ensued, curious enough. I dare say she sat a quarter of an hour on the edge of my bed, gazing at my face. She then drew nearer, bent close over me; slightly raised my cap, and turned back the border so as to expose my hair; she looked at my hand lying on the bed-clothes. This done, she turned to the chair where my clothes lay; it was at the foot of the bed. Hearing her touch and lift them, I opened my eyes with precaution, for I own I felt curious to see how far her taste for research would lead her. It led her a good way: every article did she inspect. I divined her motive for this proceeding, viz. the wish to form from the garments a judgment

respecting the wearer, her station, means, neatness, etc. The end was not bad, but the means were hardly fair or justifiable. In my dress was a pocket; she fairly turned it inside out: she counted the money in my purse; she opened a little memorandum-book, coolly perused its contents, and took from between the leaves a small plaited lock of Miss Marchmont's grey hair. To a bunch of three keys, being those of my trunk, desk, and work-box, she accorded special attention; with these, indeed, she withdrew a moment to her own room. I softly rose in my bed and followed her with my eye: these keys, reader, were not brought back till they had left on the toilet of the adjoining room the impress of their wards in wax. All being thus done decently and in order, my property was returned to its place, my clothes were carefully refolded. Of what nature were the conclusions deduced from this scrutiny? Were they favourable or otherwise? Vain question. Madame's face of stone (for of stone in its present night aspect it looked: it had been human, and, as I said before, motherly, in the salon) betrayed no response.

Her duty done—I felt that in her eyes this business was a duty—she rose, noiseless as a shadow: she moved towards her own chamber; at the door, she turned, fixing her eye on the heroine of the bottle, who still slept and loudly snored. Mrs. Svini (I presume this was Mrs. Svini, Anglicé or Hibernice, Sweeny)—Mrs. Sweeny's doom was in

Madame Beck's eye—an immutable purpose that eye spoke: Madame's visitations for shortcomings might be slow, but they were sure. All this was very un-English: truly I was in a foreign land.

The morrow made me further acquainted with Mrs. Sweeny. It seems she had introduced herself to her present employer as an English lady in reduced circumstances: a native, indeed, of Middlesex, professing to speak the English tongue with the purest metropolitan accent. Madame—reliant on her own infallible expedients for finding out the truth in time—had a singular intrepidity in hiring service off-hand (as indeed seemed abundantly proved in my own case). She received Mrs. Sweeny as nursery-governess to her three children. I need hardly explain to the reader that this lady was in effect a native of Ireland; her station I do not pretend to fix: she boldly declared that she had "had the bringing-up of the son and daughter of a marquis." I think, myself, she might possibly have been a hanger-on, nurse, fosterer, or washer-woman, in some Irish family: she spoke a smothered tongue, curiously overlaid with mincing cockney inflections. By some means or other she had acquired, and now held in possession, a wardrobe of rather suspicious splendour—gowns of stiff and costly silk, fitting her indifferently, and apparently made for other proportions than those they now adorned; caps with real lace borders, and—the chief item in the inventory, the spell by which she

struck a certain awe through the household, quelling the otherwise scornfully disposed teachers and servants, and, so long as her broad shoulders *wore* the folds of that majestic drapery, even influencing Madame herself—*a real Indian shawl*—"un véritable Cachmire," as Madame Beck said, with unmixed reverence and amaze. I feel quite sure that without this "Cachmire" she would not have kept her footing in the pensionnat for two days: by virtue of it, and it only, she maintained the same a month.

But when Mrs. Sweeny knew that I was come to fill her shoes, then it was that she declared herself —then did she rise on Madame Beck in her full power—then come down on me with her concentrated weight. Madame bore this revelation and visitation so well, so stoically, that I for very shame could not support it otherwise than with composure. For one little moment Madame Beck absented herself from the room; ten minutes after, an agent of the police stood in the midst of us. Mrs. Sweeny and her effects were removed. Madame's brow had not been ruffled during the scene—her lips had not dropped one sharply-accented word.

This brisk little affair of the dismissal was all settled before breakfast: order to march given, policeman called, mutineer expelled, "chambre d'enfants" fumigated and cleansed, windows thrown open, and every trace of the accomplished Mrs. Sweeny—even to the fine essence and spiritual

fragrance which gave token so subtle and so fatal of the head and front of her offending—was annihilated from the Rue Fossette : all this, I say, was done between the moment of Madame Beck's issuing like Aurora from her chamber, and that in which she coolly sat down to pour out her first cup of coffee.

About noon, I was summoned to dress Madame. (It appeared my place was to be a hybrid between gouvernante and lady's-maid.) Till noon, she haunted the house in her wrapping-gown, shawl, and soundless slippers. How would the lady-chief of an English school approve this custom ?

The dressing of her hair puzzled me ; she had plenty of it : auburn, unmixed with grey : though she was forty years old. Seeing my embarrassment, she said, "You have not been a femme de chambre in your own country ?" And taking the brush from my hand, and setting me aside, not ungently or disrespectfully, she arranged it herself. In performing other offices of the toilet, she half-directed, half-aided me, without the least display of temper or impatience. N.B.—That was the first and last time I was required to dress her. Henceforth, on Rosine, the portress, devolved that duty.

When attired, Madame Beck appeared a personage of a figure rather short and stout, yet still graceful in its own peculiar way ; that is, with the grace resulting from proportion of parts. Her complexion was fresh and sanguine, not too rubi-

cund ; her eye, blue and serene ; her dark silk dress fitted her as a French sempstress alone can make a dress fit ; she looked well, though a little bourgeoise ; as bourgeoise, indeed, she was. I know not what of harmony pervaded her whole person ; and yet her face offered contrast, too : its features were by no means such as are usually seen in conjunction with a complexion of such blended freshness and repose : their outline was stern : her forehead was high but narrow ; it expressed capacity and some benevolence, but no expanse ; nor did her peaceful yet watchful eye ever know the fire which is kindled in the heart or the softness which flows thence. Her mouth was hard ; it could be a little grim ; her lips were thin. For sensibility and genius, with all their tenderness and temerity, I felt somehow that Madame would be the right sort of Minos in petticoats.

In the long run, I found she was something else in petticoats too. Her name was Modeste Maria Beck, née Kint : it ought to have been Ignacia. She was a charitable woman, and did a great deal of good. There never was a mistress whose rule was milder. I was told that she never once remonstrated with the intolerable Mrs. Sweeny, despite her tipsiness, disorder, and general neglect ; yet Mrs. Sweeny had to go the moment her departure became convenient. I was told, too, that neither masters nor teachers were found fault with in that establishment ; yet both masters and teachers were

often changed; they vanished and others filled their places, none could well explain how.

The establishment was both a pensionnat and an externat: the externes or day-pupils exceeded one hundred in number; the boarders were about a score. Madame must have possessed high administrative powers: she ruled all these, together with four teachers, eight masters, six servants, and three children, managing at the same time to perfection the pupils' parents and friends; and that without apparent effort; without bustle, fatigue, fever, or any symptom of undue excitement: occupied she always was—busy, rarely. It is true that Madame had her own system for managing and regulating this mass of machinery; and a very pretty system it was: the reader has seen a specimen of it, in that small affair of turning my pocket inside out, and reading my private memoranda. "Surveillance," "espionage,"—these were her watchwords.

Still, Madame knew what honesty was, and liked it—that is, when it did not obtrude its clumsy scruples in the way of her will and interest. She had a respect for "Angleterre"; and as to "les Anglaises," she would have the women of no other country about her own children, if she could help it.

Often in the evening, after she had been plotting and counter-plotting, spying and receiving the reports of spies all day, she would come up to my room—a trace of real weariness on her brow—and

she would sit down and listen while the children said their little prayers to me in English : the Lord's Prayer, and the hymn beginning "Gentle Jesus," these little Catholics were permitted to repeat at my knee ; and, when I had put them to bed, she would talk to me (I soon gained enough French to be able to understand, and even answer her) about England and Englishwomen, and the reasons for what she was pleased to term their superior intelligence, and more real and reliable probity. Very good sense she often showed ; very sound opinions she often broached : she seemed to know that keeping girls in distrustful restraint, in blind ignorance, and under a surveillance that left them no moment and no corner for retirement, was not the best way to make them grow up honest and modest women ; but she averred that ruinous consequences would ensue if any other method were tried with continental children : they were so accustomed to restraint, that relaxation, however guarded, would be misunderstood and fatally presumed on. She was sick, she would declare, of the means she had to use, but use them she must ; and after discoursing, often with dignity and delicacy, to me, she would move away on her "souliers de silence," and glide ghost-like through the house, watching and spying everywhere, peering through every keyhole, listening behind every door.

After all, Madame's system was not bad—let me do her justice. Nothing could be better than all

her arrangements for the physical well-being of her scholars. No minds were overtasked; the lessons were well distributed and made incomparably easy to the learner; there was a liberty of amusement, and a provision for exercise which kept the girls healthy; the food was abundant and good; neither pale nor puny faces were anywhere to be seen in the Rue Fossette. She never grudged a holiday; she allowed plenty of time for sleeping, dressing, washing, eating; her method in all these matters was easy, liberal, salutary, and rational: many an austere English school-mistress would do vastly well to imitate her—and I believe many would be glad to do so, if exacting English parents would let them.

As Madame Beck ruled by espionage, she of course had her staff of spies: she perfectly knew the quality of the tools she used, and while she would not scruple to handle the dirtiest for a dirty occasion—flinging this sort from her like refuse rind, after the orange had been duly squeezed—I have known her fastidious in seeking pure metal for clean uses; and when once a bloodless and rustless instrument was found, she was careful of the prize, keeping it in silk and cotton-wool. Yet, woe be to that man or woman who relied on her one inch beyond the point where it was her interest to be trustworthy: interest was the master-key of Madame's nature—the mainspring of her motives—the alpha and omega of her life. I have seen her *feelings* appealed to, and I have smiled in half-pity,

half-scorn at the appellants. None ever gained her ear through that channel, or swayed her purpose by that means. On the contrary, to attempt to touch her heart was the surest way to rouse her antipathy, and to make of her a secret foe. It proved to her that she had no heart to be touched : it reminded her where she was impotent and dead. Never was the distinction between charity and mercy better exemplified than in her. While devoid of sympathy, she had a sufficiency of rational benevolence : she would give in the readiest manner to people she had never seen—rather, however, to classes than to individuals. "Pour les pauvres," she opened her purse freely—against *the poor man*, as a rule, she kept it closed. In philanthropic schemes for the benefit of society at large she took a cheerful part ; no private sorrow touched her : no force or mass of suffering concentrated in one heart had power to pierce hers. Not the agony in Gethsemane, not the death on Calvary, could have wrung from her eyes one tear.

I say again, Madame was a very great and a very capable woman. That school offered her for her powers too limited a sphere ; she ought to have swayed a nation : she should have been a leader of a turbulent legislative assembly. Nobody could have browbeaten her, none irritated her nerves, exhausted her patience, or over-reached her astuteness. In her own single person, she could have comprised the duties of a first minister and a super-

intendent of police. Wise, firm, faithless; secret, crafty, passionless; watchful and inscrutable; acute and insensate—withal perfectly decorous—what more could be desired?

The sensible reader will not suppose that I gained all the knowledge here condensed for his benefit in one month, or in one half-year. No! what I saw at first was the thriving outside of a large and flourishing educational establishment. Here was a great house, full of healthy, lively girls, all well-dressed and many of them handsome, gaining knowledge by a marvellously easy method, without painful exertion or useless waste of spirits; not, perhaps, making very rapid progress in anything; taking it easy, but still always employed, and never oppressed. Here was a corps of teachers and masters more stringently tasked, as all the real head-labour was to be done by them, in order to save the pupils, yet having their duties so arranged that they relieved each other in quick succession whenever the work was severe: here, in short, was a foreign school; of which the life, movement and variety made it a complete and most charming contrast to many English institutions of the same kind.

Behind the house was a large garden, and, in summer, the pupils almost lived out of doors amongst the rose-bushes and fruit-trees. Under the vast and vine-draped berceau, Madame would take her seat on summer afternoons, and send for

the classes, in turns, to sit round and sew and read. Meantime, masters came and went, delivering short and lively lectures, rather than lessons, and the pupils made notes of their instructions, or did *not* make them—just as inclination prompted; secure that, in case of neglect, they could copy the notes of their companions. Besides the regular monthly *jours de sortie*, the Catholic fête-days brought a succession of holidays all the year round; and sometimes on a bright summer morning, or soft summer evening, the boarders were taken out for a long walk into the country, regaled with *gaufres* and *vin blanc*, or new milk and *pain bis*, or *pistolets au beurre* (rolls) and coffee. All this seemed very pleasant, and Madame appeared goodness itself; and the teachers not so bad, but they might be worse; and the pupils, perhaps, a little noisy and rough, but types of health and glee.

Thus did the view appear, seen through the enchantment of distance; but there came a time when distance was to melt for me—when I was to be called down from my watch-tower of the nursery, whence I had hitherto made my observations, and was to be compelled into closer intercourse with this little world of the Rue Fossette.

I was one day sitting upstairs, as usual, hearing the children their English lessons, and at the same time turning a silk dress for Madame, when she came sauntering into the room with that absorbed air and brow of hard thought she sometimes wore,

and which made her look so little genial. Dropping into a seat opposite mine, she remained some minutes silent. Désirée, the eldest girl, was reading to me some little essay of Mrs. Barbauld's, and I was making her translate currently from English to French as she proceeded, by way of ascertaining that she comprehended what she said: Madame listened.

Presently, without preface or prelude, she said, almost in the tone of one making an accusation, "Mees, in England you were a governess."

"No, Madame," said I, smiling, "you are mistaken."

"Is this your first essay at teaching—this attempt with my children?"

I assured her it was. Again she became silent; but looking up, as I took a pin from the cushion, I found myself an object of study: she held me under her eye; she seemed turning me round in her thought—measuring my fitness for a purpose, weighing my value in a plan. Madame had, ere this, scrutinized all I had, and I believe she esteemed herself cognizant of much that I was; but from that day, for the space of about a fortnight, she tried me by new tests. She listened at the nursery door when I was shut in with the children; she followed me at a cautious distance when I walked out with them, stealing within ear-shot whenever the trees of park or boulevard afforded a sufficient screen: a strict preliminary process

having thus been observed, she made a move forward.

One morning, coming on me abruptly, and with the semblance of a hurry, she said she found herself placed in a little dilemma. Mr. Wilson, the English master, had failed to come at his hour, she feared he was ill; the pupils were waiting in classe: there was no one to give a lesson; should I, for once, object to giving a short dictation exercise, just that the pupils might not have it to say, they had missed their English lesson?

"In classe, Madame?" I asked.

"Yes, in classe: in the second division."

"Where there are sixty pupils," said I; for I knew the number, and with my usual base habit of cowardice, I shrank into my sloth like a snail into its shell, and alleged incapacity and impracticability as a pretext to escape action. If left to myself, I should infallibly have let this chance slip. Inadventurous, unstirred by impulses of practical ambition, I was capable of sitting twenty years teaching infants the hornbook, turning silk dresses and making children's frocks. Not that true contentment dignified this infatuated resignation: my work had neither charm for my taste, nor hold on my interest; but it seemed to me a great thing to be without heavy anxiety, and relieved from intimate trial: the negation of severe suffering was the nearest approach to happiness I expected to know. Besides, I seemed to hold two lives—the life of

thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter.

"Come," said Madame, as I stooped more busily than ever over the cutting-out of a child's pinafore, "leave that work."

"But Fifine wants it, Madame."

"Fifine must want it, then, for *I* want *you*."

And as Madame Beck did really want and was resolved to have me—as she had long been dissatisfied with the English master, with his shortcomings in punctuality, and his careless method of tuition—as, too, *she* did not lack resolution and practical activity, whether *I* lacked them or not—she, without more ado, made me relinquish thimble and needle; my hand was taken into hers, and I was conducted downstairs. When we reached the carré, a large square hall between the dwelling-house and the pensionnat, she paused, dropped my hand, faced, and scrutinized me. I was flushed, and tremulous from head to foot: tell it not in Gath, I believe I was crying. In fact, the difficulties before me were far from being wholly imaginary; some of them were real enough; and not the least substantial lay in my want of mastery over the medium through which I should be obliged to teach. I had, indeed, studied French closely since my arrival in Villette; learning its practice by day,

and its theory in every leisure moment at night, to as late an hour as the rule of the house would allow candle-light; but I was far from yet being able to trust my powers of correct oral expression.

"Dîtes donc," said Madame sternly, "vous sentez vous réellement trop faible?"

I might have said "Yes," and gone back to nursery obscurity, and there, perhaps, mouldered for the rest of my life; but looking up at Madame, I saw in her countenance a something that made me think twice ere I decided. At that instant she did not wear a woman's aspect, but rather a man's. Power of a particular kind strongly limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not *my* kind of power: neither sympathy, nor congeniality, nor submission, were the emotions it awakened. I stood—not soothed, nor won, nor overwhelmed. It seemed as if a challenge of strength between opposing gifts was given, and I suddenly felt all the dishonour of my diffidence—all the pusillanimity of my slackness to aspire.

"Will you," she said, "go backward or forward?" indicating with her hand, first, the small door of communication with the dwelling-house, and then the great double portals of the classes or school-rooms.

"En avant," I said.

"But," pursued she, cooling as I warmed, and continuing the hard look, from very antipathy to which I drew strength and determination, "can you face the classes, or are you over-excited?"

She sneered slightly in saying this: nervous excitability was not much to Madame's taste.

"I am no more excited than this stone," I said, tapping the flag with my toe: "or than you," I added, returning her look.

"Bon! But let me tell you these are not quiet, decorous, English girls you are going to encounter. Ce sont des Labassecouriennes, rondes, franches, brusques, et tant soit peu rebelles."

I said: "I know; and I know, too, that though I have studied French hard since I came here, yet I still speak it with far too much hesitation—too little accuracy to be able to command their respect: I shall make blunders that will lay me open to the scorn of the most ignorant. Still, I mean to give the lesson."

"They always throw over timid teachers," said she.

"I know that, too, Madame; I have heard how they rebelled against and persecuted Miss Turner" —a poor friendless English teacher, whom Madame had employed, and lightly discarded; and to whose piteous history I was no stranger.

"C'est vrai," said she, coolly. "Miss Turner had no more command over them than a servant from the kitchen would have had. She was weak and wavering; she had neither tact nor intelligence, decision nor dignity. Miss Turner would not do for these girls at all."

I made no reply, but advanced to the closed school-room door.

"You will not expect aid from me, or from any one," said Madame. "That would at once set you down as incompetent for your office."

I opened the door, let her pass with courtesy, and followed her. There were three school-rooms, all large. That dedicated to the second division, where I was to figure, was considerably the largest, and accommodated an assemblage more numerous, more turbulent, and infinitely more unmanageable than the other two. In after days, when I knew the ground better, I used to think sometimes (if such a comparison may be permitted), that the quiet, polished, tame first division, was to the robust, riotous, demonstrative second division, what the English House of Lords is to the House of Commons.

The first glance informed me that many of the pupils were more than girls—quite young women: I knew that some of them were of noble family (as nobility goes in Labassecour), and I was well convinced that not one amongst them was ignorant of my position in Madame's household. As I mounted the estrade (a low platform, raised a step above the flooring), where stood the teacher's chair and desk, I beheld opposite to me a row of eyes and brows that threatened stormy weather—eyes full of an insolent light, and brows hard and unblushing as marble. The continental "female" is quite a different being to the insular "female" of the same age and class: I never saw such eyes

and brows in England. Madame Beck introduced me in one cool phrase, sailed from the room, and left me alone in my glory.

I shall never forget that first lesson, nor all the under-current of life and character it opened up to me. Then first did I begin rightly to see the wide difference that lies between the novelist's and poet's ideal "jeune fille," and the said "jeune fille" as she really is.

It seems that three titled belles in the first row had sat down predetermined that a *bonne d'enfants* should not give them lessons in English. They knew they had succeeded in expelling obnoxious teachers before now; they knew that Madame would at any time throw overboard a professeur or maîtresse who became unpopular with the school—that she never assisted a weak official to retain his place—that if he had not strength to fight, or tact to win his way, down he went: looking at "Miss Snowe" they promised themselves an easy victory.

Mesdemoiselles Blanche, Virginie, and Angélique opened the campaign by a series of titterings and whisperings; these soon swelled into murmurs and short laughs, which the remoter benches caught up and echoed more loudly. This growing revolt of sixty against one, soon became oppressive enough; my command of French being so limited, and exercised under such cruel constraint.

Could I but have spoken in my own tongue, I felt as if I might have gained a hearing; for, in the

first place, though I knew I looked a poor creature, and in many respects actually was so, yet Nature had given me a voice that could make itself heard, if lifted in excitement or deepened by emotion. In the second place, while I had no flow, only a hesitating trickle of language in ordinary circumstances, yet—under stimulus such as was now rife through the mutinous mass—I could, in English, have rolled out readily phrases stigmatizing their proceedings as such proceedings deserved to be stigmatized; and then with some sarcasm, flavoured with contemptuous bitterness for the ringleaders, and relieved with easy banter for the weaker but less knavish followers, it seemed to me that one might possibly get command over this wild herd and bring them into training, at least. All I could now do was to walk up to Blanche—Mademoiselle de Melcy, a young baronne—the eldest, tallest, handsomest, and most vicious—stand before her desk, take from under her hand her exercise-book, remount the estrade, deliberately read the composition, which I found very stupid, and, as deliberately, and in the face of the whole school, tear the blotted page in two.

This action availed to draw attention and check noise. One girl alone, quite in the background, persevered in the riot with undiminished energy. I looked at her attentively. She had a pale face, hair like night, broad strong eyebrows, decided features, and a dark, mutinous, sinister eye: I noted that

she sat close by a little door, which door, I was well aware, opened into a small closet where books were kept. She was standing up for the purpose of conducting her clamour with freer energies. I measured her stature and calculated her strength. She seemed both tall and wiry; but, so the conflict were brief and the attack unexpected, I thought I might manage her.

Advancing up the room, looking as cool and careless as I possibly could, in short, *ayant l'air de rien;* I slightly pushed the door and found it was ajar. In an instant, and with sharpness, I had turned on her. In another instant she occupied the closet, the door was shut, and the key in my pocket.

It so happened that this girl, Dolores by name, and a Catalonian by race, was the sort of character at once dreaded and hated by all her associates; the act of summary justice above noted proved popular: there was not one present but, in her heart, liked to see it done. They were stilled for a moment; then a smile—not a laugh—passed from desk to desk: then—when I had gravely and tranquilly returned to the estrade, courteously requested silence, and commenced a dictation as if nothing at all had happened—the pens travelled peacefully over the pages, and the remainder of the lesson passed in order and industry.

"C'est bien," said Madame Beck, when I came out of class, hot and a little exhausted. "Ca ira."

She had been listening and peeping through a spy-hole the whole time.

From that day I ceased to be nursery governess, and became English teacher. Madame raised my salary; but she got thrice the work out of me she had extracted from Mr. Wilson, at half the expense.

CHAPTER IX.

ISIDORE.

My time was now well and profitably filled up. What with teaching others and studying closely myself, I had hardly a spare moment. It was pleasant. I felt I was getting on; not lying the stagnant prey of mould and rust, but polishing my faculties and whetting them to a keen edge with constant use. Experience of a certain kind lay before me, on no narrow scale. Villette is a cosmopolitan city, and in this school were girls of almost every European nation, and likewise of very varied rank in life. Equality is much practised in Labassecour; though not republican in form, it is nearly so in substance, and at the desks of Madame Beck's establishment the young countess and the young bourgeoise sat side by side. Nor could you always by outward indications decide which was noble and which plebeian; except that, indeed, the latter had often franker and more courteous manners, while the former bore away the bell for a delicately-balanced combination of insolence and deceit. In

the former there was often quick French blood mixed with the marsh-phlegm : I regret to say that the effect of this vivacious fluid chiefly appeared in the oilier glibness with which flattery and fiction ran from the tongue, and in a manner lighter and livelier, but quite heartless and insincere.

To do all parties justice, the honest aboriginal Labassecouriennes had an hypocrisy of their own, too ; but it was of a coarse order, such as could deceive few. Whenever a lie was necessary for their occasions, they brought it out with a careless ease and breadth altogether untroubled by the rebuke of conscience. Not a soul in Madame Beck's house, from the scullion to the directress herself, but was above being ashamed of a lie ; they thought nothing of it : to invent might not be precisely a virtue, but it was the most venial of faults. "J'ai menti plusieurs fois" formed an item of every girl's and woman's monthly confession ; the priest heard unshocked, and absolved unreluctant. If they had missed going to mass, or read a chapter of a novel, that was another thing : these were crimes whereof rebuke and penance were the unfailing meed.

While yet but half-conscious of this state of things, and unlearned in its results, I got on in my new sphere very well. After the first few difficult lessons, given amidst peril and on the edge of a moral volcano that rumbled under my feet and sent sparks and hot fumes into my eyes, the eruptive

spirit seemed to subside, as far as I was concerned. My mind was a good deal bent on success : I could not bear the thought of being baffled by mere undisciplined disaffection and wanton indocility, in this first attempt to get on in life. Many hours of the night I used to lie awake, thinking what plan I had best adopt to get a reliable hold on these mutineers, to bring this stiff-necked tribe under permanent influence. In the first place, I saw plainly that aid in no shape was to be expected from Madame : her righteous plan was to maintain an unbroken popularity with the pupils, at any and every cost of justice or comfort to the teachers. For a teacher to seek her alliance in any crisis of insubordination was equivalent to securing her own expulsion. In intercourse with her pupils, Madame only took to herself what was pleasant, amiable, and recommendatory ; rigidly requiring of her lieutenants sufficiency for every annoying crisis, where to act with adequate promptitude was to be unpopular. Thus, I must look only to myself.

Imprimis—it was clear as the day that this swinish multitude were not to be driven by force. They were to be humoured, borne with very patiently : a courteous though sedate manner impressed them ; a very rare flash of raillery did good. Severe or continuous mental application they could not, or would not, bear : heavy demand on the memory, the reason, the attention, they rejected point-blank. Where an English girl of not more than average

capacity and docility would quietly take a theme and bind herself to the task of comprehension and mastery, a Labassecourienne would laugh in your face, and throw it back to you with the phrase,—"Dieu, que c'est difficile. Je n'en veux pas. Cela m'ennuie trop."

A teacher who understood her business would take it back at once without hesitation, contest, or expostulation—proceed with even exaggerated care to smooth every difficulty, to reduce it to the level of their understandings, return it to them thus modified, and lay on the lash of sarcasm with unsparing hand. They would feel the sting, perhaps wince a little under it; but they bore no malice against this sort of attack, provided the sneer was not *sour*, but *hearty*, and that it held well up to them, in a clear light, and bold type, so that she who ran might read, their incapacity, ignorance, and sloth. They would riot for three additional lines to a lesson; but I never knew them rebel against a wound given to their self-respect: the little they had of that quality was trained to be crushed, and it rather liked the pressure of a firm heel than otherwise.

By degrees, as I acquired fluency and freedom in their language, and could make such application of its more nervous idioms as suited their case, the elder and more intelligent girls began rather to like me in their way: I noticed that whenever a pupil had been roused to feel in her soul the stirring of

worthy emulation, or the quickening of honest shame, from that date she was won. If I could but once make their (usually large) ears burn under their thick glossy hair, all was comparatively well. By-and-by bouquets began to be laid on my desk in the morning; by way of acknowledgment for this little foreign attention, I used sometimes to walk with a select few during recreation. In the course of conversation it befell once or twice that I made an unpremeditated attempt to rectify some of their singularly distorted notions of principle; especially I expressed my ideas of the evil and baseness of a lie. In an unguarded moment, I chanced to say that, of the two errors, I considered falsehood worse than an occasional lapse in church-attendance. The poor girls were tutored to report in Catholic ears whatever the Protestant teacher said. An edifying consequence ensued. Something—an unseen, an indefinite, a nameless something—stole between myself and these my best pupils: the bouquets continued to be offered, but conversation thenceforth became impracticable. As I paced the alleys or sat in the berceau, a girl never came to my right hand but a teacher, as if by magic, appeared at my left. Also, wonderful to relate, Madame's shoes of silence brought her continually to my back, as quick, as noiseless and unexpected, as some wandering zephyr.

The opinion of my Catholic acquaintance concerning my spiritual prospects was somewhat naïvely

expressed to me on one occasion. A pensionnaire, to whom I had rendered some little service, exclaimed one day as she sat beside me,—

"Mademoiselle, what a pity you are a Protestant!"

"Why, Isabelle?"

"Parceque, quand vous serez morte—vous brûlerez tout de suite dans l'Enfer."

"Croyez-vous?"

"Certainement que j'y crois: tout le monde le sait; et d'ailleurs le prêtre me l'a dit."

Isabelle was an old, blunt little creature. She added, *sotto voce*,—

"Pour assurer votre salut là-haut, on ferait bien de vous brûler toute vive ici-bas."

I laughed, as, indeed, it was impossible to do otherwise.

* * * * * *

Has the reader forgotten Miss Ginevra Fanshawe? If so, I must be allowed to re-introduce that young lady as a thriving pupil of Madame Beck's; for such she was. On her arrival in the Rue Fossette, two or three days after my sudden settlement there, she encountered me with very little surprise. She must have had good blood in her veins, for never was any duchess more perfectly, radically, unaffectedly *nonchalante* than she: a weak, transient amaze was all she knew of the sensation of wonder. Most of her other faculties seemed to be in the same flimsy condition: her liking and disliking, her love and

hate, were mere cobweb and gossamer; but she had one thing about her that seemed strong and durable enough, and that was—her selfishness.

She was not proud; and—*bonne d'enfants* as I was—she would forthwith have made of me a sort of friend and confidante. She teased me with a thousand vapid complaints about school-quarrels and household economy: the cookery was not to her taste; the people about her, teachers and pupils, she held to be despicable, because they were foreigners. I bore with her abuse of the Friday's salt fish and hard eggs—with her invective against the soup, the bread, the coffee—with some patience for a time; but at last, wearied by iteration, I turned crusty, and put her to rights; a thing I ought to have done in the very beginning, for a salutary setting down always agreed with her.

Much longer had I to endure her demands on me in the way of work. Her wardrobe, as far as concerned articles of external wear, was well and elegantly supplied; but there were other habiliments not so carefully provided: what she had needed frequent repair. She hated needle-drudgery herself, and she would bring her hose, etc., to me in heaps to be mended. A compliance of some weeks threatening to result in the establishment of an intolerable bore, I at last distinctly told her she must make up her mind to mend her own garments. She cried on receiving this information, and accused me of having ceased to be her friend; but I held

my decision, and let the hysterics pass as they could.

Nothwithstanding these foibles, and various others needless to mention—but by no means of a refined or elevating character—how pretty she was! How charming she looked, when she came down on a sunny Sunday morning, well-dressed, and well-humoured, robed in pale lilac silk, and with her fair long curls reposing on her white shoulders. Sunday was a holiday which she always passed with friends resident in town; and amongst these friends she speedily gave me to understand was one who would fain become something more. By glimpses and hints it was shown me, and by the general buoyancy of her look and manner it was ere long proved, that ardent admiration—perhaps genuine love was at her command. She called her suitor "Isidore": this, however, she intimated was not his real name, but one by which it pleased her to baptize him—his own, she hinted, not being "very pretty." Once, when she had been bragging about the vehemence of "Isidore's" attachment, I asked if she loved him in return.

"Comme cela," said she: "he is handsome, and he loves me to distraction, so that I am well amused. Ça suffit."

Finding that she carried the thing on longer than, from her very fickle tastes, I had anticipated, I one day took it upon me to make serious inquiries as to whether the gentleman was such as her parents, and

especially her uncle—on whom, it appeared, she was dependent—would be likely to approve. She allowed that this was very doubtful, as she did not believe "Isidore" had much money.

"Do you encourage him?" I asked.

"Furieusement, sometimes," said she.

"Without being certain that you will be permitted to marry him?"

"Oh, how dowdyish you are! I don't want to be married. I am too young."

"But if he loves you as much as you say, and yet it comes to nothing in the end, he will be made miserable."

"Of course he will break his heart. I should be shocked and disappointed if he didn't."

"I wonder whether this M. Isidore is a fool?" said I.

"He is, about me; but he is wise in other things, à ce qu'on dit. Mrs. Cholmondeley considers him extremely clever: she says he will push his way by his talents; all I know is, that he does little more than sigh in my presence, and that I can wind him round my little finger."

Wishing to get a more definite idea of this love-stricken M. Isidore, whose position seemed to me or the least secure, I requested her to favour me with a personal description; but she could not describe: she had neither words nor the power of putting them together so as to make graphic phrases. She even seemed not properly to have noticed him: nothing of

his looks, of the changes in his countenance, had touched her heart or dwelt in her memory—that he was "beau, mais plutôt bel homme que joli garçon," was all she could assert. My patience would often have failed, and my interest flagged, in listening to her, but for one thing. All the hints she dropped, all the details she gave, went unconsciously to prove, to my thinking, that M. Isidore's homage was offered with great delicacy and respect. I informed her very plainly that I believed him much too good for her, and intimated with equal plainness my impression that she was but a vain coquette. She laughed, shook her curls from her eyes, and danced away as if I had paid her a compliment.

Miss Ginevra's school-studies were little better than nominal; there were but three things she practised in earnest, viz. music, singing, and dancing; also embroidering the fine cambric handkerchiefs which she could not afford to buy ready worked: such mere trifles as lessons in history, geography, grammar, and arithmetic, she left undone, or got others to do for her. Very much of her time was spent in visiting. Madame, aware that her stay at school was now limited to a certain period which would not be extended whether she made progress or not, allowed her great license in this particular. Mrs. Cholmondeley—her *chaperon*—a gay, fashionable lady, invited her whenever she had company at her own house, and sometimes took her to evening parties at the houses of her acquaintance. Ginevra perfectly

approved this mode of procedure: it had but one inconvenience; she was obliged to be well dressed, and she had not money to buy variety of dresses. All her thoughts turned on this difficulty; her whole soul was occupied with expedients for effecting its solution. It was wonderful to witness the activity of her otherwise indolent mind on this point, and to see the much-daring intrepidity to which she was spurred by a sense of necessity, and the wish to shine.

She begged boldly of Mrs. Cholmondeley—boldly, I say: not with an air of reluctant shame, but in this strain:—

"My darling Mrs. C., I have nothing in the world fit to wear for your party next week; you *must* give me a book-muslin dress, and then a *ceinture bleu céleste: do*—there's an angel! will you?"

The "darling Mrs. C." yielded at first; but finding that applications increased as they were complied with, she was soon obliged, like all Miss Fanshawe's friends, to oppose resistance to encroachment. After a while I heard no more of Mrs. Cholmondeley's presents: but still, visiting went on, and the absolutely necessary dresses continued to be supplied: also many little expensive *etcetera*—gloves, bouquets, even trinkets. These things, contrary to her custom, and even nature—for she was not secretive—were most sedulously kept out of sight for a time; but one evening, when she was going to a large party for which particular care and

elegance of costume were demanded, she could not resist coming to my chamber to show herself in all her splendour.

Beautiful she looked: so young, so fresh, and with a delicacy of skin and flexibility of shape altogether English, and not found in the list of continental female charms. Her dress was new, costly, and perfect. I saw at a glance that it lacked none of those finishing details which cost so much, and give to the general effect such an air of tasteful completeness.

I viewed her from top to toe. She turned airily round that I might survey her on all sides. Conscious of her charms, she was in her best humour: her rather small blue eyes sparkled gleefully. She was going to bestow on me a kiss, in her school-girl fashion of showing her delight: but I said, "Steady! Let us be steady, and know what we are about, and find out the meaning of our magnificence"—and so put her off at arm's length, to undergo cooler inspection.

"Shall I do?" was her question.

"Do?" said I. "There are different ways of doing; and, by my word, I don't understand yours!"

"But how do I look?"

"You look well dressed."

She thought the praise not warm enough, and proceeded to direct attention to the various decorative points of her attire. "Look at this *parure*,"

said she. "The brooch, the ear-rings, the bracelets : no one in the school has such a set—not Madame herself."

"I see them all." (Pause.) "Did M. de Bassompierre give you those jewels ?"

"My uncle knows nothing about them."

"Were they presents from Mrs. Cholmondeley ?"

"Not they, indeed. Mrs. Cholmondeley is a mean, stingy creature : she never gives me anything now."

I did not choose to ask any further questions, but turned abruptly away.

"Now, old Crusty—old Diogenes" (these were her familiar terms for me when we disagreed), "what is the matter now ?"

"Take yourself away. I have no pleasure in looking at you or your *parure*."

For an instant she seemed taken by surprise.

"What now, Mother Wisdom ? I have not got into debt for it—that is, not for the jewels, nor the gloves, nor the bouquet. My dress is certainly not paid for, but uncle de Bassompierre will pay it in the bill : he never notices items, but just looks at the total ; and he is so rich, one need not care about a few guineas more or less."

"Will you go ? I want to shut the door. . . . Ginevra, people may tell you you are very handsome in that ball-attire ; but, in *my* eyes, you will never look so pretty as you did in the gingham gown and plain straw bonnet you wore when I first saw you."

"Other people have not your puritanical tastes," was her angry reply. "And, besides, I see no right you have to sermonize me."

"Certainly! I have little right; and you, perhaps, have still less to come flourishing and fluttering into my chamber—a mere jay in borrowed plumes. I have not the least respect for your feathers, Miss Fanshawe; and especially the peacock's eyes, you call a *parure:* very pretty things, if you had bought them with money which was your own, and which you could well spare, but not at all pretty under present circumstances."

"On est là pour Mademoiselle Fanshawe!" was announced by the portress, and away she tripped.

This semi-mystery of the *parure* was not solved till two or three days afterwards, when she came to make a voluntary confession.

"You need not be sulky with me," she began, "in the idea that I am running somebody, papa or M. de Bassompierre, deeply into debt. I assure you nothing remains unpaid for, but the few dresses I have lately had: all the rest is settled."

"There," I thought, "lies the mystery; considering that they were not given you by Mrs. Cholmondeley, and that your own means are limited to a few shillings, of which I know you to be excessively careful."

"Ecoutez!" she went on, drawing near and speaking in her most confidential and coaxing tone; for my "sulkiness" was inconvenient to her: she

liked me to be in a talking and listening mood, even if I only talked to chide and listened to rail. "Ecoutez, chère grogneuse! I will tell you all how and about it; you will then see, not only how right the whole thing is, but how cleverly managed. In the first place, I *must* go out. Papa himself said that he wished me to see something of the world; he particularly remarked to Mrs. Cholmondeley, that, though I was a sweet creature enough, I had rather a bread-and-butter-eating, school-girl air; of which it was his special desire that I should get rid, by an introduction to society here, before I make my regular début in England. Well, then, if I go out, I *must* dress. Mrs. Cholmondeley is turned shabby, and will give nothing more; it would be too hard upon uncle to make him pay for *all* the things I need: *that* you can't deny—*that* agrees with your own preachments. Well, but SOMEBODY who heard me (quite by chance, I assure you) complaining to Mrs. Cholmondeley of my distressed circumstances, and what straits I was put to for an ornament or two—*somebody*, far from grudging one a present, was quite delighted at the idea of being permitted to offer some trifle. You should have seen what a *blanc-bec* he looked when he first spoke of it: how he hesitated and blushed, and positively trembled from fear of a repulse."

"That will do, Miss Fanshawe. I suppose I am to understand that M. Isidore is the benefactor:

that it is from him you have accepted that costly *parure;* that he supplies your bouquets and your gloves?"

"You express yourself so disagreeably," said she, "one hardly knows how to answer; what I mean to say is, that I occasionally allow Isidore the pleasure and honour of expressing his homage by the offer of a trifle."

"It comes to the same thing. . . . Now, Ginevra, to speak the plain truth, I don't very well understand these matters; but I believe you are doing very wrong—seriously wrong. Perhaps, however, you now feel certain that you will be able to marry M. Isidore; your parents and uncle have given their consent, and, for your part, you love him entirely?"

"Mais pas du tout!" (she always had recourse to French when about to say something specially heartless and perverse). "Je suis sa reine, mais il n'est pas mon roi."

"Excuse me, I must believe this language is mere nonsense and coquetry. There is nothing great about you, yet you are above profiting by the good-nature and purse of a man to whom you feel absolute indifference! You love M. Isidore far more than you think, or will avow."

"No. I danced with a young officer the other night, whom I love a thousand times more than he. I often wonder why I feel so very cold to Isidore, for everybody says he is handsome, and other ladies

admire him ; but, somehow, he bores me : let me see now how it is. . . ."

And she seemed to make an effort to reflect. In this I encouraged her. "Yes!" I said, "try to get a clear idea of the state of your mind. To me it seems in a great mess—chaotic as a rag-bag."

"It is something in this fashion," she cried out ere long : "the man is too romantic and devoted, and he expects something more of me than I find it convenient to be. He thinks I am perfect: furnished with all sorts of sterling qualities and solid virtues, such as I never had, nor intend to have. Now, one can't help, in his presence, rather trying to justify his good opinion ; and it does so tire one to be goody, and to talk sense,—for he really thinks I am sensible. I am far more at my ease with you, old lady—you, you dear crosspatch—who take me at my lowest, and know me to be coquettish, and ignorant, and flirting, and fickle, and silly, and selfish, and all the other sweet things you and I have agreed to be a part of my character."

"This is all very well," I said, making a strenuous effort to preserve that gravity and severity which ran risk of being shaken by this whimsical candour, "but it does not alter that wretched business of the presents. Pack them up, Ginevra, like a good, honest girl, and send them back."

"Indeed, I won't," said she stoutly.

"Then you are deceiving M. Isidore. It stands to reason that by accepting his presents you give him to understand he will one day receive an equivalent, in your regard. . . ."

"But he won't," she interrupted: "he has his equivalent now, in the pleasure of seeing me wear them—quite enough for him: he is only bourgeois."

This phrase, in its senseless arrogance, quite cured me of the temporary weakness which had made me relax my tone and aspect. She rattled on:—

"My present business is to enjoy youth, and not to think of fettering myself, by promise or vow, to this man or that. When first I saw Isidore, I believed he would help me to enjoy it. I believed he would be content with my being a pretty girl; and that we should meet and part and flutter about like two butterflies, and be happy. Lo, and behold! I find him at times as grave as a judge, and deep-feeling and thoughtful. Bah! Les penseurs, les hommes profonds et passionés, ne sont pas à mon gout. Le Colonel Alfred de Hamal suits me far better. Va pour les beaux fats et les jolis fripons! Vive les joies et les plaisirs! A bas les grandes passions et les sévères vertus!"

She looked for an answer to this tirade. I gave none.

"J'aime mon beau Colonel," she went on: "je

n'aimera jamais son rival. Je ne serai jamais femme de bourgeois, moi ! "

I now signified that it was imperatively necessary my apartment should be relieved of the honour of her presence : she went away laughing.

CHAPTER X.

DR. JOHN.

Madame Beck was a most consistent character; forbearing with all the world, and tender to no part of it. Her own children drew her into no deviation from the even tenor of her stoic calm. She was solicitous about her family, vigilant for their interests, and physical well-being; but she never seemed to know the wish to take her little children upon her lap, to press their rosy lips with her own, to gather them in a genial embrace, to shower on them softly the benignant caress, the loving word.

I have watched her sometimes sitting in the garden, viewing the little ones afar off, as they walked in a distant alley with Trinette, their *bonne;* in her mien spoke care and prudence. I know she often pondered anxiously what she called "leur avenir"; but if the youngest, a puny and delicate but engaging child, chancing to spy her, broke from its nurse, and toddling down the walk, came all eager and laughing and panting to clasp her knee, Madame would just calmly put out one hand,

so as to prevent inconvenient concussion from the child's sudden onset: "Prends garde, mon enfant!" she would say unmoved, patiently permit it to stand near her a few moments, and then, without smile or kiss, or endearing syllable, rise and lead it back to Trinette.

Her demeanour to the eldest girl was equally characteristic in another way. This was a vicious child. "Quelle peste que cette Désirée! Quel poison que cet enfant là!" were the expressions dedicated to her, alike in kitchen and school-room. Amongst her other endowments she boasted an exquisite skill in the art of provocation, sometimes driving her *bonne* and the servants almost wild. She would steal to their attics, open their drawers and boxes, wantonly tear their best caps and soil their best shawls; she would watch her opportunity to get at the beaufet of the salle-à-manger, where she would smash articles of porcelain or glass—or to the cupboard of the store-room, where she would plunder the preserves, drink the sweet wine, break jars and bottles, and so contrive as to throw the onus of suspicion on the cook and the kitchen-maid. All this when Madame saw, and of which when she received report, her sole observation, uttered with matchless serenity, was:—

"Désirée a besoin d'une surveillance toute particulière." Accordingly she kept this promising olive-branch a good deal at her side. Never once, I believe, did she tell her faithfully of her faults,

explain the evil of such habits, and show the results which must thence ensue. Surveillance must work the whole cure. It failed of course. Désirée was kept in some measure from the servants, but she teased and pillaged her mamma instead. Whatever belonging to Madame's work-table or toilet she could lay her hands on, she stole and hid. Madame saw all this, but she still pretended not to see : she had not rectitude of soul to confront the child with her vices. When an article disappeared whose value rendered restitution necessary, she would profess to think that Désirée had taken it away in play, and beg her to restore it. Désirée was not to be so cheated : she had learned to bring falsehood to the aid of theft, and would deny having touched the brooch, ring, or scissors. Carrying on the hollow system, the mother would calmly assume an air of belief, and afterwards ceaselessly watch and dog the child till she tracked her to her hiding-places—some hole in the garden-wall—some chink or cranny in garret or out-house. This done, Madame would send Désirée out for a walk with her *bonne*, and profit by her absence to rob the robber. Désirée proved herself the true daughter of her astute parent, by never suffering either her countenance or manner to betray the least sign of mortification on discovering the loss.

The second child, Fifine, was said to be like its dead father. Certainly, though the mother had given it her healthy frame, her blue eye and ruddy

cheek, not from her was derived its moral being. It was an honest, gleeful little soul : a passionate, warm-tempered, bustling creature it was too, and of the sort likely to blunder often into perils and difficulties. One day it bethought itself to fall from top to bottom of a steep flight of stone steps ; and when Madame, hearing the noise (she always heard every noise), issued from the salle-à-manger and picked it up, she said quietly,—

"Cet enfant a un os de cassé."

At first we hoped this was not the case. It was, however, but too true : one little plump arm hung powerless.

"Let Mees" (meaning me) "take her," said Madame ; "et qu'on aille toute de suite chercher un fiacre."

In a *fiacre* she promptly, but with admirable coolness and self-possession, departed to fetch a surgeon.

It appeared she did not find the family-surgeon at home ; but that mattered not : she sought until she laid her hand on a substitute to her mind, and brought him back with her. Meantime I had cut the child's sleeve from its arm, undressed and put it to bed.

We none of us, I suppose (by *we* I mean the bonne, the cook, the portress, and myself, all which personages were now gathered in the small and heated chamber), looked very scrutinizingly at the new doctor when he came into the room. I, at

least, was taken up with endeavouring to soothe Fifine; whose cries (for she had good lungs) were appalling to hear. These cries redoubled in intensity as the stranger approached her bed; when he took her up, "Let alone!" she cried passionately, in her broken English (for she spoke English, as did the other children). "I will not you: I will Dr. Pillule!"

"And Dr. Pillule is my very good friend," was the answer, in perfect English; "but he is busy at a place three leagues off, and I am come in his stead. So now, when we get a little calmer, we must commence business; and we will soon have that unlucky little arm bandaged and in right order."

Hereupon he called for a glass of *eau sucrée*, fed her with some teaspoonfuls of the sweet liquid (Fifine was a frank gourmande; anybody could win her heart through her palate), promised her more when the operation should be over, and promptly went to work. Some assistance being needed, he demanded it of the cook, a robust, strong-armed woman; but she, the portress, and the nurse instantly fled. I did not like to touch that small, tortured limb, but, thinking there was no alternative, my hand was already extended to do what was requisite. I was anticipated; Madame Beck had put out her own hand: hers was steady while mine trembled.

"Ça vaudra mieux," said the doctor, turning from me to her.

He showed wisdom in his choice. Mine would have been feigned stoicism, forced fortitude. Hers was neither forced nor feigned.

"Merci, Madame ; très bien, fort bien !" said the operator when he had finished. "Voilà un sang-froid bien opportun, et qui vaut mille élans de sensibilité déplacée."

He was pleased with her firmness, she with his compliment. It is likely, too, that his whole general appearance, his voice, mien, and manner wrought impressions in his favour. Indeed, when you looked well at him, and when a lamp was brought in—for it was evening and now waxing dusk—you saw that, unless Madame Beck had been less than woman, it could not well be otherwise. This young doctor (he *was* young) had no common aspect. His stature looked imposingly tall in that little chamber, and amidst that group of Dutch-made women ; his profile was clear, fine, and expressive : perhaps his eye glanced from face to face rather too vividly, too quickly, and too often ; but it had a most pleasant character, and so had his mouth ; his chin was full, cleft, Grecian, and perfect. As to his smile, one could not in a hurry make up one's mind as to the descriptive epithet it merited ; there was something in it that pleased, but something too that brought surging up into the mind all one's foibles and weak points : all that could lay one open to a laugh. Yet Fifine liked this doubtful smile, and thought the owner genial :

much as he had hurt her, she held out her hand to bid him a friendly good-night. He patted the little hand kindly, and then he and Madame went downstairs together ; she talking in her highest tide of spirits and volubility, he listening with an air of good-natured amenity, dashed with that unconscious roguish archness I find it difficult to describe.

I noticed that though he spoke French well, he spoke English better ; he had, too, an English complexion, eyes, and form. I noticed more. As he passed me in leaving the room, turning his face in my direction one moment—not to address me, but to speak to Madame, yet so standing, that I almost necessarily looked up at him—a recollection which had been struggling to form in my memory, since the first moment I heard his voice, started up perfected. This was the very gentleman to whom I had spoken at the bureau ; who had helped me in the matter of the trunk ; who had been my guide through the dark, wet park. Listening, as he passed down the long vestibule out into the street, I recognized his very tread ; it was the same firm and equal stride I had followed under the dripping trees.

* * * * * *

It was to be concluded that this young surgeon-physician's first visit to the Rue Fossette would be the last. The respectable Dr. Pillule being expected home the next day, there appeared no

reason why his temporary substitute should again represent him; but the Fates had written their decree to the contrary.

Dr. Pillule had been summoned to see a rich old hypochondriac at the antique university town of Bouquin-Moisi, and upon his prescribing change of air and travel as remedies, he was retained to accompany the timid patient on a tour of some weeks; it but remained, therefore, for the new doctor to continue his attendance at the Rue Fossette.

I often saw him when he came; for Madame would not trust the little invalid to Trinette, but required me to spend much of my time in the nursery. I think he was skilful. Fifine recovered rapidly under his care, yet even her convalescence did not hasten his dismissal. Destiny and Madame Beck seemed in league, and both had ruled that he should make deliberate acquaintance with the vestibule, the private staircase and upper chambers of the Rue Fossette.

No sooner did Fifine emerge from his hands than Désirée declared herself ill. That possessed child had a genius for simulation, and captivated by the attentions and indulgences of a sick-room, she came to the conclusion that an illness would perfectly accommodate her tastes, and took her bed accordingly. She acted well, and her mother still better; for while the whole case was transparent to Madame Beck as the day, she treated it with an astonishingly well-assured air of gravity and good faith.

What surprised me was, that Dr. John (so the young Englishman had taught Fifine to call him, and we all took from her the habit of addressing him by this name, till it became an established custom, and he was known by no other in the Rue Fossette)—that Dr. John consented tacitly to adopt Madame's tactics, and to fall in with her manœuvres. He betrayed, indeed, a period of comic doubt, cast one or two rapid glances from the child to the mother, indulged in an interval of self-consultation, but finally resigned himself with a good grace to play his part in the farce. Désirée ate like a raven, gambolled day and night in her bed, pitched tents with the sheets and blankets, lounged like a Turk amidst pillows and bolsters, diverted herself with throwing her shoes at her bonne and grimacing at her sisters—overflowed, in short, with unmerited health and evil spirits; only languishing when her mamma and the physician paid their diurnal visit. Madame Beck, I knew, was glad, at any price, to have her daughter in bed out of the way of mischief; but I wondered that Dr. John did not tire of the business.

Every day, on this mere pretext of a motive, he gave punctual attendance; Madame always received him with the same empressement, the same sunshine for himself, the same admirably counterfeited air of concern for her child. Dr. John wrote harmless prescriptions for the patient, and viewed her mother with a shrewdly sparkling eye. Madame caught his

rallying looks without resenting them—she had too much good sense for that. Supple as the young doctor seemed, one could not despise him—this pliant part was evidently not adopted in the design to curry favour with his employer: while he liked his office at the pensionnat and lingered strangely about the Rue Fossette, he was independent, almost careless in his carriage there; and yet, too, he was often thoughtful and preoccupied.

It was not perhaps my business to observe the mystery of his bearing, or search out its origin or aim; but, placed as I was, I could hardly help it. He laid himself open to my observation, according to my presence in the room just that degree of notice and consequence a person of my exterior habitually expects: that is to say, about what is given to unobtrusive articles of furniture, chairs of ordinary joiner's work, and carpets of no striking pattern. Often, while waiting for Madame, he would muse, smile, watch, or listen like a man who thinks himself alone. I, meantime, was free to puzzle over his countenance and movements, and wonder what could be the meaning of that peculiar interest and attachment—all mixed up with doubt and strangeness, and inexplicably ruled by some presiding spell—which wedded him to this demi-convent, secluded in the built-up core of a capital. He, I believe, never remembered that I had eyes in my head, much less a brain behind them.

Nor would he ever have found this out, but that

one day, while he sat in the sunshine and I was observing the colouring of his hair, whiskers, and complexion—the whole being of such a tone as a strong light brings out with somewhat perilous force (indeed I recollect I was driven to compare his beamy head in my thoughts to that of the "golden image" which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up), an idea new, sudden, and startling, riveted my attention with an overmastering strength and power of attraction. I know not to this day how I looked at him: the force of surprise, and also of conviction, made me forget myself; and I only recovered wonted consciousness when I saw that his notice was arrested, and that it had caught my movement in a clear little oval mirror fixed in the side of the window recess—by the aid of which reflector Madame often secretly spied persons walking in the garden below. Though of so gay and sanguine a temperament, he was not without a certain nervous sensitiveness which made him ill-at-ease under a direct, inquiring gaze. On surprising me thus, he turned and said, in a tone which, though courteous, had just so much dryness in it as to mark a shade of annoyance, as well as to give to what was said the character of rebuke:—

"Mademoiselle does not spare me: I am not vain enough to fancy that it is my merits which attract her attention; it must then be some defect. Dare I ask—what?"

I was confounded, as the reader may suppose, yet not with an irrecoverable confusion ; being conscious that it was from no emotion of incautious admiration, nor yet in a spirit of unjustifiable inquisitiveness, that I had incurred this reproof. I might have cleared myself on the spot, but would not. I did not speak. I was not in the habit of speaking to him. Suffering him, then, to think what he chose and accuse me of what he would, I resumed some work I had dropped, and kept my head bent over it during the remainder of his stay. There is a perverse mood of the mind which is rather soothed than irritated by misconstruction ; and in quarters where we can never be rightly known, we take pleasure, I think, in being consummately ignored. What honest man, on being casually taken for a housebreaker, does not feel rather tickled than vexed at the mistake ?

CHAPTER XI.

THE PORTRESSE'S CABINET.

It was summer and very hot. Georgette, the youngest of Madame Beck's children, took a fever. Désirée, suddenly cured of her ailments, was, together with Fifine, packed off to Bonne-Maman in the country, by way of precaution against infection. Medical aid was now really needed, and Madame, choosing to ignore the return of Dr. Pillule, who had been at home a week, conjured his English rival to continue his visits. One or two of the pensionnaires complained of headache, and in other respects seemed slightly to participate in Georgette's ailment. "Now, at last," I thought, "Dr. Pillule must be recalled: the prudent directress will never venture to permit the attendance of so young a man on the pupils."

The directress was very prudent, but she could also be intrepidly venturous. She actually introduced Dr. John to the school division of the premises and established him in attendance on the proud and handsome Blanche de Melcy, and the

vain, flirting Angélique, her friend. Dr. John, I thought, testified a certain gratification at this mark of confidence; and if discretion of bearing could have justified the step, it would by him have been amply justified. Here, however, in this land of convents and confessionals, such a presence as his was not to be suffered with impunity in a "pensionnat de demoiselles." The school gossiped, the kitchen whispered, the town caught the rumour, parents wrote letters and paid visits of remonstrance. Madame, had she been weak, would now have been lost: a dozen rival educational houses were ready to improve this false step—if false step it were—to her ruin; but Madame was not weak, and little Jesuit though she might be, yet I clapped the hands of my heart, and with its voice cried "brava!" as I watched her able bearing, her skilled management, her temper and her firmness on this occasion.

She met the alarmed parents with a good-humoured, easy grace: for nobody matched her in, I know not whether to say the possession or the assumption of a certain "rondeur et franchise de bonne femme;" which on various occasions gained the point aimed at with instant and complete success, where severe gravity and serious reasoning would probably have failed.

"Ce pauvre Docteur Jean!" she would say, chuckling and rubbing joyously her fat, little white hands; "ce cher jeune homme! le meilleure creature du monde!" and go on to explain how she

happened to be employing him for her own children, who were so fond of him they would scream themselves into fits at the thought of another doctor: how where she had confidence for her own, she thought it natural to repose trust for others, and au reste it was only the most temporary expedient in the world: Blanche and Angélique had the migraine; Dr. John had written a prescription; voilà tout!

The parents' mouths were closed. Blanche and Angélique saved her all remaining trouble by chanting loud duets in their physician's praise; the other pupils echoed them, unanimously declaring that when they were ill, they said they would have Dr. John and nobody else; and Madame laughed, and the parents laughed too. The Labassecouriens must have a large organ of philoprogenitiveness: at least the indulgence of offspring is carried by them to excessive lengths; the law of most households being the children's will. Madame now got credit for having acted on this occasion in a spirit of motherly partiality; she came off with flying colours: people liked her as a directress better than ever.

To this day I never fully understood why she thus risked her interest for the sake of Dr. John. What people said, of course I knew well: the whole house—pupils, teachers, servants included—affirmed that she was going to marry him. So they had settled it; difference of age seemed to make no obstacle in their eyes: it was to be so.

It must be admitted that appearances did not wholly discountenance this idea; Madame seemed so bent on retaining his services, so oblivious of her former protégé, Pillule. She made, too, such a point of personally receiving his visits, and was so unfailingly cheerful, blithe, and benignant in her manner to him. Moreover, she paid about this time, marked attention to dress: the morning dishabille, the nightcap and shawl were discarded; Dr. John's early visits always found her with auburn braids all nicely arranged, silk dress trimly fitted on, neat laced brodequins in lieu of slippers: in short, the whole toilette complete as a model, and fresh as a flower. I scarcely think, however, that her intention in this went further than just to show a very handsome man that she was not quite a plain woman: and plain she was not. Without beauty of feature or elegance of form, she pleased. Without youth and its gay graces, she cheered. One never tired of seeing her: she was never monotonous, or insipid, or colourless, or flat. Her unfaded hair, her eye with its temperate blue light, her cheek with its wholesome fruit-like bloom—these things pleased in moderation, but with constancy.

Had she, indeed, floating visions of adopting Dr. John as a husband, taking him to her well-furnished home, endowing him with her savings, which were said to amount to a moderate competency, and making him comfortable for the rest of his life? Did Dr. John suspect her of such visions? I have

met him coming out of her presence with a mischievous half-smile about his lips, and in his eyes a look as of masculine vanity elate and tickled. With all his good looks and good nature, he was not perfect; he must have been very imperfect if he roguishly encouraged aims he never intended to be successful. But did he not intend them to be successful? People said he had no money, that he was wholly dependent upon his profession. Madame—though perhaps some fourteen years his senior—was yet the sort of woman never to grow old, never to wither, never to break down. They certainly were on good terms. *He* perhaps was not in love; but how many people ever *do* love, or at least marry for love, in this world? We waited the end.

For what *he* waited I do not know, nor for what he watched; but the peculiarity of his manner, his expectant, vigilant, absorbed, eager look, never wore off: it rather intensified. He had never been quite within the compass of my penetration, and I think he ranged farther and farther beyond it.

One morning little Georgette had been more feverish, and consequently more peevish; she was crying, and would not be pacified. I thought a particular draught ordered disagreed with her, and I doubted whether it ought to be continued; I waited impatiently for the doctor's coming in order to consult him.

The door-bell rang, he was admitted; I felt sure of this, for I heard his voice addressing the por-

tresse. It was his custom to mount straight to the nursery, taking about three degrees of the staircase at once, and coming upon us like a cheerful surprise. Five minutes elapsed—ten—and I saw and heard nothing of him. What could he be doing? Possibly waiting in the corridor below. Little Georgette still piped her plaintive wail, appealing to me by her familiar term, "Minnie, Minnie, me very poorly!" till my heart ached. I descended to ascertain why he did not come. The corridor was empty. Whither was he vanished? Was he with Madame in the salle-à-manger? Impossible: I had left her but a short time since, dressing in her own chamber. I listened. Three pupils were just then hard at work practising in three proximate rooms—the dining-room and the greater and lesser drawing-rooms, between which and the corridor there was but the portresse's cabinet communicating with the salons, and intended originally for a boudoir. Farther off, at a fourth instrument in the oratory, a whole class of a dozen or more were taking a singing lesson, and just then joining in a "barcarole" (I think they called it), whereof I yet remember these words, "fraîchë brisë" and "Venisë." Under these circumstances, what could I hear? A great deal, certainly; had it only been to the purpose.

Yes; I heard a giddy treble laugh in the above-mentioned little cabinet, close by the door of which I stood—that door half-unclosed; a man's voice in

a soft, deep, pleading tone, uttered some words, whereof I only caught the adjuration, "For God's sake!" Then, after a second's pause, forth issued Dr. John, his eye full shining, but not with either joy or triumph; his fair English cheek high coloured; a baffled, tortured, anxious, and yet a tender meaning on his brow.

The open door served me as a screen; but had I been full in his way, I believe he would have passed without seeing me. Some mortification, some strong vexation had hold of his soul: or rather, to write my impressions now as I received them at the time, I should say some sorrow, some sense of injustice. I did not so much think his pride was hurt, as that his affections had been wounded—cruelly wounded, it seemed to me. But who was the torturer? What being in that house had him so much in her power? Madame I believed to be in her chamber; the room whence he had stepped was dedicated to the portresse's sole use; and she, Rosine Matou, an unprincipled though pretty little French grisette, airy, fickle, dressy, vain, and mercenary—it was not, surely, to *her* hand he owed the ordeal through which he seemed to have passed?

But while I pondered, her voice, clear, though somewhat sharp, broke out in a lightsome French song, trilling through the door still ajar: I glanced in, doubting my senses. There at the table she sat in a smart dress of "jaconas rose," trimming a tiny blonde cap: not a living thing save herself was in the

room, except indeed some goldfish in a glass globe, some flowers in pots, and a broad July sunbeam.

Here was a problem: but I must go upstairs to ask about the medicine.

Dr. John sat in a chair at Georgette's bedside; Madame stood before him; the little patient had been examined and soothed, and now lay composed in her crib. Madame Beck, as I entered, was discussing the physician's own health, remarking on some real or fancied change in his looks, charging him with overwork, and recommending rest and change of air. He listened good-naturedly, but with laughing indifference, telling her that she was "trop bonne," and that he felt perfectly well. Madame appealed to me—Dr. John following her movement with a slow glance which seemed to express languid surprise at reference being made to a quarter so insignificant.

"What do you think, Miss Lucie?" asked Madame. "Is he not paler and thinner?"

It was very seldom that I uttered more than monosyllables in Dr. John's presence: he was the kind of person with whom I was likely ever to remain the neutral, passive thing he thought me. Now, however, I took licence to answer in a phrase: and a phrase I purposely made quite significant.

"He looks ill at this moment; but perhaps it is owing to some temporary cause: Dr. John may have been vexed or harassed." I cannot tell how

he took this speech, as I never sought his face for information. Georgette here began to ask me in her broken English if she might have a glass of *eau sucrée*. I answered her in English. For the first time, I fancy, he noticed that I spoke his language; hitherto he had always taken me for a foreigner, addressing me as "Mademoiselle," and giving in French the requisite directions about the children's treatment. He seemed on the point of making a remark, but thinking better of it, held his tongue.

Madame recommenced advising him; he shook his head laughing, rose and bid her good-morning, with courtesy, but still with the regardless air of one whom too much unsolicited attention was surfeiting and spoiling.

When he was gone, Madame dropped into the chair he had just left; she rested her chin in her hand; all that was animated and amiable vanished from her face: she looked stony and stern, almost mortified and morose. She sighed; a single, but a deep sigh. A loud bell rang for morning school. She got up; as she passed a dressing-table with a glass upon it, she looked at her reflected image. One single white hair streaked her nut-brown tresses; she plucked it out with a shudder. In the full summer daylight, her face, though it still had the colour, could plainly be seen to have lost the texture of youth; and then, where were youth's contours? Ah, Madame! wise as you were, even *you* knew weakness. Never had I pitied Madame

before, but my heart softened towards her, when she turned darkly from the glass. A calamity had come upon her. That hag Disappointment was greeting her with a grisly "All-hail," and her soul rejected the intimacy.

But Rosine! my bewilderment there surpasses description. I embraced five opportunities of passing her cabinet that day, with a view to contemplating her charms, and finding out the secret of their influence. She was pretty, young, and wore a well-made dress. All very good points, and, I suppose, amply sufficient to account, in any philosophic mind, for any amount of agony and distraction in a young man, like Dr. John. Still, I could not help forming half a wish that the said doctor were my brother; or at least that he had a sister or a mother who would kindly sermonize him. I say *half* a wish; I broke it, and flung it away before it became a whole one, discovering in good time its exquisite folly. "Somebody," I argued, "might as well sermonize Madame about her young physician: and what good would that do?"

I believe Madame sermonized herself. She did not behave weakly, or make herself in any shape ridiculous. It is true she had neither strong feelings to overcome, nor tender feelings by which to be miserably pained. It is true likewise that she had an important avocation, a real business to fill her time, divert her thoughts, and divide her interest. It is especially true that she possessed a

genuine good sense which is not given to all women nor to all men; and by dint of these combined advantages she behaved wisely—she behaved well. Brava! once more, Madame Beck. I saw you matched against an Apollyon of a predilection; you fought a good fight, and you overcame!

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASKET.

Behind the house at the Rue Fossette there was a garden—large, considering that it lay in the heart of a city, and to my recollection at this day it seems pleasant: but time, like distance, lends to certain scenes an influence so softening; and where all is stone around, blank wall and hot pavement, how precious seems one shrub, how lovely an enclosed and planted spot of ground!

There went a tradition that Madame Beck's house had in old days been a convent. That in years gone by—how long gone by I cannot tell, but I think some centuries—before the city had overspread this quarter, and when it was tilled ground and avenue, and such deep and leafy seclusion as ought to enbosom a religious house—that something had happened on this site which, rousing fear and inflicting horror, had left to the place the inheritance of a ghost story. A vague tale went of a black and white nun, sometimes, on some night or nights of the year, seen in some part of this

vicinage. The ghost must have been built out some ages ago, for there were houses all round now; but certain convent-relics, in the shape of old and huge fruit-trees, yet consecrated the spot; and, at the foot of one—a Methuselah of a pear-tree, dead, all but a few boughs which still faithfully renewed their perfumed snow in spring, and their honey-sweet pendants in autumn—you saw, in scraping away the mossy earth between the half-bared roots, a glimpse of slab, smooth, hard, and black. The legend went, unconfirmed and unaccredited, but still propagated, that this was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed, the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive for some sin against her vow. Her shadow it was that tremblers had feared, through long generations after her poor frame was dust; her black robe and white veil that, for timid eyes, moonlight and shade had mocked, as they fluctuated in the night-wind through the garden-thicket.

Independently of romantic rubbish, however, that old garden had its charms. On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryst with the rising moon, or taste one kiss of the evening breeze, or fancy rather than feel the freshness of dew descending. The turf was verdant, the gravelled walks were white; sun-bright nasturtiums

clustered beautiful about the roots of the doddered orchard giants. There was a large berceau, above which spread the shade of an acacia; there was a smaller, more sequestered bower, nestled in the vines which ran all along a high and grey wall, and gathered their tendrils in a knot of beauty, and hung their clusters in loving profusion about the favoured spot where jasmine and ivy met and married them.

Doubtless at high noon, in the broad, vulgar middle of the day, when Madame Beck's large school turned out rampant, and externes and pensionnaires were spread abroad, vying with the denizens of the boys' college close at hand, in the brazen exercise of their lungs and limbs—doubtless *then* the garden was a trite, trodden-down place enough. But at sunset or the hour of *salut*, when the externes were gone home, and the boarders quiet at their studies; pleasant was it then to stray down the peaceful alleys, and hear the bells of St. Jean Baptiste peal out with their sweet, soft, exalted sound.

I was walking thus one evening, and had been detained, farther within the verge of twilight than usual, by the still-deepening calm, the mellow coolness, the fragrant breathing with which flowers no sunshine could win now answered the persuasion of the dew. I saw by a light in the oratory window that the Catholic household were then gathered to evening prayer—a rite, from attendance on which I now and then, as a Protestant, exempted myself.

"One moment longer," whispered solitude and the summer moon, "stay with us: all is truly quiet now; for another quarter of an hour your presence will not be missed: the day's heat and bustle have tired you; enjoy these precious minutes."

The windowless backs of houses built in this garden, and in particular the whole of one side, was skirted by the rear of a long line of premises—being the boarding-houses of the neighbouring college. This rear, however, was all blank stone, with the exception of certain attic loopholes high up, opening from the sleeping-rooms of the women-servants, and also one casement in a lower storey said to mark the chamber or study of a master. But, though thus secure, an alley, which ran parallel with the very high wall on that side the garden, was forbidden to be entered by the pupils. It was called indeed "l'allée défendue," and any girl setting foot there would have rendered herself liable to as severe a penalty as the mild rules of Madame Beck's establishment permitted. Teachers might indeed go there with impunity; but as the walk was narrow, and the neglected shrubs were grown very thick and close on each side, weaving overhead a roof of branch and leaf which the sun's rays penetrated but in rare chequers, this alley was seldom entered even during day, and after dusk was carefully shunned.

From the first I was tempted to make an exception to this rule of avoidance: the seclusion, the

very gloom of the walk attracted me. For a long time the fear of seeming singular scared me away; but by degrees, as people became accustomed to me and my habits, and to such shades of peculiarity as were engrained in my nature—shades, certainly not striking enough to interest, and perhaps not prominent enough to offend, but born in and with me, and no more to be parted with than my identity —by slow degrees I became a frequenter of this strait and narrow path. I made myself gardener of some tintless flowers that grew between its closely-ranked shrubs; I cleared away the relics of past autumns, choking up a rustic seat at the far end. Borrowing of Goton, the cuisinière, a pail of water and a scrubbing-brush, I made this seat clean. Madame saw me at work and smiled approbation: whether sincerely or not I don't know; but she *seemed* sincere.

"Voyez-vous!" cried she, "comme elle est propre, cette demoiselle Lucie? Vous aimez donc cette allée, meess?"

"Yes," I said, "it is quiet and shady."

"C'est juste," cried she with an air of bonté; and she kindly recommended me to confine myself to it as much as I chose, saying, that as I was not charged with the surveillance, I need not trouble myself to walk with the pupils: only I might permit her children to come there, to talk English with me.

On the night in question, I was sitting on the

hidden seat reclaimed from fungi and mould, listening to what seemed the far-off sounds of the city. Far off, in truth, they were not: this school was in the city's centre; hence, it was but five minutes' walk to the park, scarce ten to buildings of palatial splendour. Quite near were wide streets brightly lit, teeming at this moment with life: carriages were rolling through them, to balls or to the opera. The same hour which tolled curfew for our convent, which extinguished each lamp, and dropped the curtain round each couch, rang for the gay city about us the summons to festal enjoyment. Of this contrast I thought not, however: gay instincts my nature had few; ball or opera I had never seen; and though often I had heard them described, and even wished to see them, it was not the wish of one who hopes to partake a pleasure if she could only reach it—who feels fitted to shine in some bright distant sphere, could she but thither win her way; it was no yearning to attain, no hunger to taste; only the calm desire to look on a new thing.

A moon was in the sky, not a full moon, but a young crescent. I saw her through a space in the boughs overhead. She and the stars, visible beside her, were no strangers where all else was strange: my childhood knew them. I had seen that golden sign with the dark globe in its curve leaning back on azure, beside an old thorn at the top of an old field in old England, in long past days, just as it now leaned back beside a stately spire in this continental capital.

Oh, my childhood! I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked, when I thought of past days, I *could* feel. About the present, it was better to be stoical; about the future—such a future as mine—to be dead. And in catalepsy and a dead trance, I studiously held the quick of my nature.

At that time, I well remember whatever could excite—certain accidents of the weather, for instance, were almost dreaded by me, because they woke the being I was always lulling, and stirred up a craving cry I could not satisfy. One night a thunder-storm broke; a sort of hurricane shook us in our beds: the Catholics rose in panic and prayed to their saints. As for me, the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live. I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close by my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch-dark. Within the dormitory they gathered round the night-lamp in consternation, praying aloud. I could not go in: too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts.

I did long, achingly, then and for four-and-twenty hours afterwards, for something to fetch me out

of my present existence, and lead me upwards and onwards. This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did, figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench: then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core.

To-night, I was not so mutinous nor so miserable. My Sisera lay quiet in the tent, slumbering; and if his pain ached through his slumbers, something like an angel—the ideal—knelt near, dropping balm on the soothed temples, holding before the sealed eyes a magic glass, of which the sweet, solemn visions were repeated in dreams, and shedding a reflex from her moonlit wings and robe over the transfixed sleeper, over the tent threshold, over all the landscape lying without. Jael, the stern woman, sat apart, relenting somewhat over her captive; but more prone to dwell on the faithful expectation of Heber coming home. By which words I mean that the cool peace and dewy sweetness of the night filled me with a mood of hope: not hope on any definite point, but a general sense of encouragement and heart-ease.

Should not such a mood, so sweet, so tranquil, so unwonted, have been the harbinger of good? Alas, no good came of it! Presently the rude Real

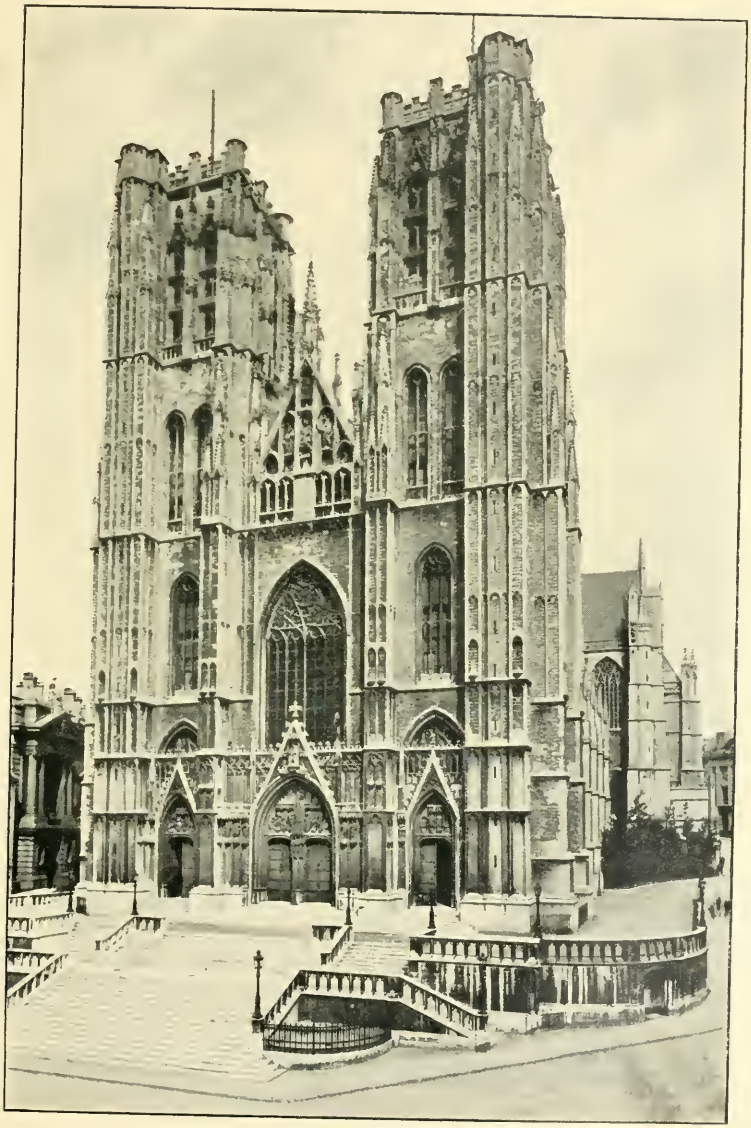
burst coarsely in—all evil, grovelling and repellent as she too often is.

Amid the dense stillness of that pile of stone overlooking the walk, the trees, the high wall, I heard a sound; a casement (all the windows here are casements, opening on hinges) creaked. Ere I had time to look up and mark where, in which storey, or by whom unclosed, a tree overhead shook, as if struck by a missile; some object dropped prone at my feet.

Nine was striking by St. Jean Baptiste's clock; day was fading, but it was not dark: the crescent-moon aided little, but the deep gilding of that point in heaven where the sun beamed last, and the crystalline clearness of a wide space above, sustained the summer twilight; even in my dark walk I could, by approaching an opening, have managed to read print of a small type. Easy was it to see then that the missile was a box, a small box of white and coloured ivory; its loose lid opened in my hand; violets lay within, violets smothering a closely-folded bit of pink paper, a note, superscribed, "Pour la robe grise." I wore indeed a dress of French grey.

Good. Was this a billet-doux? A thing I had heard of, but hitherto had not had the honour of seeing or handling. Was it this sort or commodity I held between my finger and thumb at this moment?

Scarcely: I did not dream it for a moment.



SAINTE GUDULE CATHEDRAL, BRUSSELS

Suitor or admirer my very thoughts had not conceived. All the teachers had dreams of some lover; one (but she was naturally of a credulous turn) believed in a future husband. All the pupils above fourteen knew of some prospective bridegroom; two or three were already affianced by their parents, and had been so from childhood: but into the realm of feelings and hopes which such prospects open, my speculations, far less my presumptions, had never once had warrant to intrude. If the other teachers went into town, or took a walk on the boulevards, or only attended mass, they were very certain (according to the accounts brought back) to meet with some individual of the "opposite sex," whose rapt, earnest gaze assured them of their power to strike and to attract. I can't say that my experience tallied with theirs, in this respect. I went to church and I took walks, and am very well convinced that nobody minded me. There was not a girl or woman in the Rue Fossette who could not, and did not testify to having received an admiring beam from our young doctor's blue eyes at one time or other. I am obliged, however humbling it may sound, to except myself: as far as I was concerned, those blue eyes were guiltless, and calm as the sky, to whose tint theirs seemed akin. So it came to pass that I heard the others talk, wondered often at their gaiety, security, and self-satisfaction, but did not trouble myself to look up and gaze along the path they

seemed so certain of treading. This then was no billet-doux; and it was in settled conviction to the contrary that I quietly opened it. Thus it ran—I translate :—

"Angel of my dreams! A thousand, thousand thanks for the promise kept: scarcely did I venture to hope its fulfilment. I believed you, indeed, to be half in jest; and then you seemed to think the enterprise beset with such danger—the hour so untimely, the alley so strictly secluded—often, you said, haunted by that dragon, the English teacher—une véritable bégueule Britannique à ce que vous dites—espèce de monstre, brusque et rude comme un vieux caporal de grenadiers, et revêche comme une religieuse" (the reader will excuse my modesty in allowing this flattering sketch of my amiable self to retain the slight veil of the original tongue). "You are aware," went on this precious effusion, "that little Gustave, on account of his illness, has been removed to a master's chamber—that favoured chamber, whose lattice overlooks your prison-ground. There, I, the best uncle in the world, am admitted to visit him. How tremblingly I approached the window and glanced into your Eden—an Eden for me, though a desert for you!—how I feared to behold vacancy, or the dragon aforesaid! How my heart palpitated with delight when, through apertures in the envious boughs, I at once caught the gleam of your graceful straw hat, and the waving of your grey dress—dress that I should recognize

amongst a thousand. But why, my angel, will you not look up? Cruel, to deny me one ray of those adorable eyes!—how a single glance would have revived me! I write this in fiery haste; while the physician examines Gustave, I snatch an opportunity to inclose it in a small casket, together with a bouquet of flowers, the sweetest that blow—yet less sweet than thee, my Peri—my all-charming! ever thine—thou well knowest whom!"

"I wish I did know whom," was my comment; and the wish bore even closer reference to the person addressed in this choice document, than to the writer thereof. Perhaps it was from the fiancé of one of the engaged pupils; and, in that case, there was no great harm done or intended—only a small irregularity. Several of the girls, the majority, indeed, had brothers or cousins at the neighbouring college. But, "la robe grise, le chapeau de paile," here surely was a clue—a very confusing one. The straw hat was an ordinary garden head-screen, common to a score beside myself. The grey dress hardly gave more definite indication. Madame Beck herself ordinarily wore a grey dress just now; another teacher, and three of the pensionnaires, had had grey dresses purchased of the same shade and fabric as mine: it was a sort of everyday wear which happened at that time to be in vogue.

Meanwhile, as I pondered, I knew I must go in. Lights, moving in the dormitory, announced that

prayers were over, and the pupils going to bed. Another half-hour and all doors would be locked—all lights extinguished. The front door yet stood open, to admit into the heated house the coolness of the summer night; from the portresse's cabinet close by shone a lamp, showing the long vestibule with the two-leaved drawing-room doors on one side, the great street-door closing the vista.

All at once, quick rang the bell—quick, but not loud—a cautious tinkle—a sort of warning metal whisper. Rosine darted from her cabinet and ran to open. The person she admitted stood with her two minutes in parley: there seemed a demur, a delay. Rosine came to the garden door, lamp in hand; she stood on the steps, lifting her lamp, looking round vaguely.

"Quel conte!" she cried, with a coquettish laugh. "Personne n'y a été."

"Let me pass," pleaded a voice I knew: "I ask but five minutes;" and a familiar shape, tall and grand (as we of the Rue Fossette all thought it), issued from the house, and strode down amongst the beds and walks. It was sacrilege—the intrusion of a man into that spot, at that hour; but he knew himself privileged, and perhaps he trusted to the friendly night. He wandered down the alleys, looking on this side and on that—he was lost in the shrubs, trampling flowers and breaking branches in his search—he penetrated at last the "forbidden walk." There I met him, like some ghost, I suppose.

"Dr. John! it is found."

He did not ask by whom, for with his quick eye he perceived that I held it in my hand.

"Do not betray her," he said, looking at me as if I were indeed a dragon.

"Were I ever so disposed to treachery, I cannot betray what I do not know," was my answer. "Read the note, and you will see how little it reveals."

"Perhaps you have read it," I thought to myself; and yet I could not believe he wrote it: that could hardly be his style: besides, I was fool enough to think there would be a degree of hardship in his calling me such names. His own look vindicated him; he grew hot, and coloured as he read.

"This is indeed too much: this is cruel, this is humiliating," were the words that fell from him. I thought it *was* cruel when I saw his countenance so moved. No matter whether he was to blame or not; somebody, it seemed to me, must be more to blame.

"What shall you do about it?" he inquired of me. "Shall you tell Madame Beck what you have found, and cause a stir—an esclandre?"

I thought I ought to tell, and said so; adding that I did not believe there would be either stir or esclandre: Madame was much too prudent to make a noise about an affair of that sort connected with her establishment.

He stood looking down and meditating. He was

both too proud and too honourable to entreat my secrecy on a point which duty evidently commanded me to communicate. I wished to do right, yet loathed to grieve or injure him. Just then Rosine glanced out through the open door; she could not see us, though between the trees I could plainly see her: her dress was grey, like mine. This circumstance, taken in connection with prior transactions, suggested to me that perhaps the case, however deplorable, was one in which I was under no obligation whatever to concern myself. Accordingly I said,—

"If you can assure me that none of Madame Beck's pupils are implicated in this business, I shall be very happy to stand aloof from all interference. Take the casket, the bouquet, and the billet; for my part, I gladly forget the whole affair."

"Look there!" he whispered suddenly, as his hand closed on what I offered, and at the same time he pointed through the boughs.

I looked. Behold Madame, in shawl, wrapping-gown, and slippers, softly descending the steps, and stealing like a cat round the garden: in two minutes she would have been upon Dr. John. If *she* were like a cat, however, *he*, quite as much, resembled a leopard: nothing could be lighter than his tread when he chose. He watched, and as she turned a corner, he took the garden at two noiseless bounds. She reappeared, and he was gone. Rosine helped him, instantly interposing the door

between him and his huntress. I, too, might have got away, but I preferred to meet Madame openly.

Though it was my frequent and well-known custom to spend twilight in the garden, yet, never till now had I remained so late. Full sure was I that Madame had missed—was come in search of me, and designed now to pounce on the defaulter unawares. I expected a reprimand. No. Madame was all goodness. She tendered not even a remonstrance; she testified no shade of surprise. With that consummate tact of hers, in which I believe she was never surpassed by living thing, she even professed merely to have issued forth to taste "la brise du soir."

"Quelle belle nuit!" cried she, looking up at the stars—the moon was now gone down behind the broad tower of Jean Baptiste. "Qu'il fait bon! que l'air est frais!"

And, instead of sending me in, she detained me to take a few turns with her down the principal alley. When at last we both re-entered, she leaned affably on my shoulder by way of support in mounting the front-door steps; at parting her cheek was presented to my lips, and "Bon soir, ma bonne amie; dormez bien!" was her kindly adieu for the night.

I caught myself smiling as I lay awake and thoughtful on my couch—smiling at Madame. The unction, the suavity of her behaviour offered, for one who knew her, a sure token that suspicion of

some kind was busy in her brain. From some aperture or summit of observation, through parted bough or open window, she had doubtless caught a glimpse, remote or near, deceptive or instructive, of that night's transactions. Finely accomplished as she was in the art of surveillance, it was next to impossible that a casket could be thrown into her garden, or an interloper could cross her walks to seek it, without that she, in shaken branch, passing shade, unwonted footfall, or stilly murmur (and though Dr. John had spoken very low in the few words he dropped me, yet the hum of his man's voice pervaded, I thought, the whole conventual ground)—without, I say, that she should have caught intimation of things extraordinary transpiring on her premises. *What* things, she might by no means see, or at that time be able to discover; but a delicious little ravelled plot lay tempting her to disentanglement; and in the midst, folded round and round in cobwebs, had she not secured "Meess Lucy," clumsily involved, like the foolish fly she was?

CHAPTER XIII.

A SNEEZE OUT OF SEASON.

I HAD occasion to smile—nay, to laugh at Madame again, within the space of four-and-twenty hours after the little scene treated of in the last chapter.

Villette owns a climate as variable, though not so humid, as that of any English town. A night of high wind followed upon that of soft sunset, and all the next day was one of dry storm—dark, beclouded, yet rainless,—the streets were dim with sand and dust, whirled from the boulevards. I know not that even lovely weather would have tempted me to spend the evening-time of study and recreation where I had spent it yesterday. My alley, and indeed, all the walks and shrubs in the garden, had acquired a new but not a pleasant interest; their seclusion was now become precarious; their calm—insecure. That casement which rained billets had vulgarized the once dear nook it overlooked; and elsewhere, the eyes of the flowers had gained vision, and the knots in the tree-boles listened like secret ears. Some plants there were, indeed, trodden down by

Dr. John in his search, and his hasty and heedless progress, which I wished to prop up, water, and revive; some footmarks, too, he had left on the beds: but these, in spite of the strong wind, I found a moment's leisure to efface very early in the morning, ere common eyes had discovered them. With a pensive sort of content, I sat down to my desk and my German, while the pupils settled to their evening lessons, and the other teachers took up their needlework.

The scene of the "étude du soir" was always the refectory, a much smaller apartment than any of the three classes or school-rooms; for here none, save the boarders, were ever admitted, and these numbered only a score. Two lamps hung from the ceiling over the two tables; these were lit at dusk, and their kindling was the signal for school-books being set aside, a grave demeanour assumed, general silence enforced, and then commenced "la lecture pieuse." This said "lecture pieuse" was, I soon found, mainly designed as a wholesome mortification of the Intellect, a useful humiliation of the Reason; and such a dose for Common Sense as she might digest at her leisure, and thrive on as she best could.

The book brought out (it was never changed, but when finished, recommenced) was a venerable volume, old as the hills—grey as the Hotel de Ville.

I would have given two francs for the chance of

getting that book once into my hands, turning over the sacred yellow leaves, ascertaining the title, and perusing with my own eyes the enormous figments which, as an unworthy heretic, it was only permitted me to drink in with my bewildered ears. This book contained legends of the saints. Good God! (I speak the words reverently) what legends they were! What gasconading rascals those saints must have been, if they first boasted these exploits or invented these miracles. These legends, however, were no more than monkish extravagances, over which one laughed inwardly; there were, besides, priestly matters, and the priestcraft of the book was far worse than its monkery. The ears burned on each side of my head as I listened, perforce, to tales of moral martyrdom inflicted by Rome; the dread boasts of confessors, who had wickedly abused their office, trampling to deep degradation high-born ladies, making of countesses and princesses the most tormented slaves under the sun. Stories like that of Conrad and Elizabeth of Hungary, recurred again and again, with all its dreadful viciousness, sickening tyranny, and black impiety: tales that were nightmares of oppression, privation, and agony

I sat out this "lecture pieuse" for some nights as well as I could, and as quietly too; only once breaking off the points of my scissors by involuntarily sticking them somewhat deep in the worm-eaten board of the table before me. But, at last,

it made me so burning hot, and my temples, and my heart, and my wrist throbbed so fast, and my sleep afterwards was so broken with excitement, that I could sit no longer. Prudence recommended henceforward a swift clearance of my person from the place, the moment that guilty old book was brought out. No Mause Headrigg ever felt a stronger call to take up her testimony against Sergeant Bothwell, than I—to speak my mind in this matter of the popish "lecture pieuse." However, I did manage somehow to curb and rein in; and though always, as soon as Rosine came to light the lamps, I shot from the room quickly, yet also I did it quietly; seizing that vantage moment given by the little bustle before the dead silence, and vanishing whilst the boarders put their books away.

When I vanished—it was into darkness; candles were not allowed to be carried about, and the teacher who forsook the refectory had only the unlit hall, school-room, or bedroom, as a refuge. In winter I sought the long classes, and paced them fast to keep myself warm—fortunate if the moon shone, and if there were only stars, soon reconciled to their dim gleam, or even to the total eclipse of their absence. In summer it was never quite dark, and then I went upstairs to my own quarter of the long dormitory, opened my own casement (that chamber was lit by five casements large as great doors), and leaning out looked forth upon the city

beyond the garden, and listened to band-music from the park or the palace-square, thinking meantime my own thoughts, living my own life, in my own still shadow-world.

This evening, fugitive as usual before the Pope and his works, I mounted the staircase, approached the dormitory, and quietly opened the door, which was always kept carefully shut, and which, like every other door in this house, revolved noiselessly on well-oiled hinges. Before I *saw*, I *felt* that life was in the great room, usually void: not that there was either stir or breath, or rustle of sound, but Vacuum lacked, Solitude was not at home. All the white beds—the "lits d'ange," as they were poetically termed—lay visible at a glance; all were empty: no sleeper reposed therein. The sound of a drawer cautiously slid out struck my ear; stepping a little to one side, my vision took a free range, unimpeded by falling curtains. I now commanded my own bed and my own toilet, with a locked work-box upon it, and locked drawers underneath.

Very good. A dumpy, motherly, little body, in decent shawl and the cleanest of possible nightcaps, stood before this toilet, hard at work, apparently doing me the kindness of "tidying out" the "meuble." Open stood the lid of the work-box, open the top drawer; duly and impartially was each succeeding drawer opened in turn: not an article of their contents but was lifted and unfolded, not a paper but was glanced over, not a

little box but was unlidded; and beautiful was the adroitness, exemplary the care with which the search was accomplished. Madame wrought at it like a true star, "unhastening yet unresenting." I will not deny that it was with a secret glee I watched her. Had I been a gentleman I believe Madame would have found favour in my eyes, she was so handy, neat, thorough, in all she did: some people's movements provoke the soul by their loose awkwardness, hers—satisfied by their trim compactness. I stood, in short, fascinated; but it was necessary to make an effort to break this spell: a retreat must be beaten. The searcher might have turned and caught me; there would have been nothing for it then but a scene, and she and I would have had to come all at once, with a sudden clash, to a thorough knowledge of each other: down would have gone conventionalities, away swept disguises, and *I* should have looked into her eyes, and *she* into mine—we should have known that we could work together no more, and parted in this life for ever.

Where was the use of tempting such a catastrophe? I was not angry, and had no wish in the world to leave her. I could hardly get another employer whose yoke would be so light and so easy of carriage; and truly, I liked Madame for her capital sense, whatever I might think of her principles: as to her system, it did me no harm; she might work me with it to her heart's content:

nothing would come of the operation. Loverless and inexpectant of love, I was as safe from spies in my heart-poverty, as the beggar from thieves in his destitution of purse. I turned, then, and fled; descending the stairs with progress as swift and soundless as that of the spider, which at the same instant ran down the banister.

How I laughed when I reached the school-room. I knew now she had certainly seen Dr. John in the garden; I knew what her thoughts were. The spectacle of a suspicious nature so far misled by its own inventions, tickled me much. Yet as the laugh died, a kind of wrath smote me, and then bitterness followed: it was the rock struck, and Meribah's waters gushing out. I never had felt so strange and contradictory an inward tumult as I felt for an hour that evening: soreness and laughter, and fire, and grief, shared my heart between them. I cried hot tears: not because Madame mistrusted me—I did not care twopence for her mistrust—but for other reasons. Complicated, disquieting thoughts broke up the whole repose of my nature. However, that turmoil subsided: next day I was again Lucy Snowe.

On revisiting my drawers, I found them all securely locked; the closest subsequent examination could not discover change or apparent disturbance in the position of one object. My few dresses were folded as I had left them; a certain little bunch of white violets that had once been silently

presented to me by a stranger (a stranger to me, for we had never exchanged words), and which I had dried and kept for its sweet perfume between the folds of my best dress, lay there unstirred; my black silk scarf, my lace chemisette and collars were unrumpled. Had she creased one solitary article, I own I should have felt much greater difficulty in forgiving her; but finding all straight and orderly, I said, "Let bygones be bygones. I am unharmed: why should I bear malice?"

* * * * * *

A thing there was which puzzled myself, and I sought in my brain a key to that riddle almost as sedulously as Madame had sought a guide to useful knowledge in my toilet drawers. How was it that Dr. John, if he had not been accessory to the dropping of that casket into the garden, should have known that it *was* dropped, and appeared so promptly on the spot to seek it? So strong was the wish to clear up this point that I began to entertain this daring suggestion:—

"Why may I not, in case I should ever have the opportunity, ask Dr. John himself to explain this coincidence?"

And so long as Dr. John was absent, I really believed I had courage to test him with such a question.

Little Georgette was now convalescent; and her physician accordingly made his visits very rare: indeed, he would have ceased them altogether, had

not Madame insisted on his giving an occasional call till the child should be quite well.

She came into the nursery one evening just after I had listened to Georgette's lisped and broken prayer, and had put her to bed. Taking the little one's hand, she said,—

"Cette enfant a toujours un peu de fièvre." And presently afterwards, looking at me with a quicker glance than was habitual to her quiet eye, "Le Docteur John l'a-t-il vue dernièrement? Non, n'est-ce pas?"

Of course she knew this better than any other person in the house. "Well," she continued, "I am going out, pour faire quelques courses en fiacre. I shall call on Dr. John, and send him to the child. I will that he sees her this evening; her cheeks are flushed, her pulse is quick: *you* will receive him—for my part, I shall be from home."

Now the child was well enough, only warm with the warmth of July; it was scarcely less needful to send for a priest to administer extreme unction than for a doctor to prescribe a dose; also Madame rarely made "courses," as she called them, in the evening: moreover, this was the first time she had chosen to absent herself on the occasion of a visit from Dr. John. The whole arrangement indicated some plan; this I saw, but without the least anxiety. "Ha! ha! Madame," laughed Light-heart the Beggar, "your crafty wits are on the wrong tack."

She departed, attired very smartly, in a shawl of price, and a certain *chapeau vert tendre*—hazardous, as to its tint, for any complexion less fresh than her own, but, to her, not unbecoming. I wondered what she intended : whether she really would send Dr. John or not ; or whether indeed he would come : he might be engaged.

Madame had charged me not to let Georgette sleep till the doctor came ; I had therefore sufficient occupation in telling her nursery tales and palavering the little language for her benefit. I affected Georgette ; she was a sensitive and loving child ; to hold her in my lap, or carry her in my arms, was to me a treat. To-night she would have me lay my head on the pillow of her crib ; she even put her little arms round my neck. Her clasp, and the nestling action with which she pressed her cheek to mine, made me almost cry with a tender pain. Feeling of no kind abounded in that house ; this pure little drop from a pure little source was too sweet : it penetrated deep, and subdued the heart, and sent a gush to the eyes.

Half an hour or an hour passed ; Georgette murmured in her soft lisp that she was growing sleepy. "And you *shall* sleep," thought I, "malgré maman and médecin, if they are not here in ten minutes."

Hark ! There was the ring, and there the tread, astonishing the staircase by the fleetness with which it left the steps behind. Rosine introduced

Dr. John, and, with a freedom of manner not altogether peculiar to herself, but characteristic of the domestics of Villette generally, she stayed to hear what he had to say. Madame's presence would have awed her back to her own realm of the vestibule and the cabinet—for mine, or that of any other teacher or pupil, she cared not a jot. Smart, trim and pert, she stood, a hand in each pocket of her gay grisette apron, eyeing Dr. John with no more fear or shyness than if he had been a picture instead of a living gentleman.

"Le marmot n'a rien n'est-ce pas?" said she, indicating Georgette with a jerk of her chin.

"Pas beaucoup," was the answer, as the doctor hastily scribbled with his pencil some harmless prescription.

"Eh bien!" pursued Rosine, approaching him quite near, while he put up his pencil. "And the box—did you get it? Monsieur went off like a coup de vent the other night; I had not time to ask him."

"I found it: yes."

"And who threw it, then?" continued Rosine, speaking quite freely the very words I should so much have wished to say, but had no address or courage to bring it out: how short some people make the road to a point which, for others, seems unattainable!

"That may be my secret," rejoined Dr. John briefly, but with no sort of hauteur: he seemed

quite to understand the Rosine or grisette character.

"Mais enfin," continued she, nothing abashed, "monsieur knew it was thrown, since he came to seek it—how did he know?"

"I was attending a little patient in the college near," said he, "and saw it dropped out of his chamber window, and so came to pick it up."

How simple the whole explanation! The note had alluded to a physician as then examining "Gustave."

"Ah ça!" pursued Rosine, "il n'y a donc rien là dessous: pas de mystère, pas d'amourrette, par exemple?"

"Pas plus que sur ma main," responded the doctor, showing his palm.

"Quel dommage!" responded the grisette: "et moi—à qui tout cela commencait à donner des idées."

"Vraiment! vous en êtes pour vos frais," was the doctor's cool rejoinder.

She pouted. The doctor could not help laughing at the sort of "moue" she made: when he laughed, he had something peculiarly good-natured and genial in his look. I saw his hand incline to his pocket.

"How many times have you opened the door for me within this last month?" he asked.

"Monsieur ought to have kept count of that," said Rosine, quite readily.

"As if I had not something better to do!" rejoined he; but I saw him give her a piece of gold, which she took unscrupulously, and then danced off to answer the door-bell, ringing just now every five minutes, as the various servants came to fetch the half-boarders.

The reader must not think too hardly of Rosine; on the whole, she was not a bad sort of person, and had no idea there could be any disgrace in grasping at whatever she could get, or any effrontery in chattering like a pie to the best gentleman in Christendom.

I had learnt something from the above scene besides what concerned the ivory box: viz. that not on the robe de jaconas, pink or grey, nor yet on the frilled and pocketed apron, lay the blame of breaking Dr. John's heart: these items of array were obviously guiltless as Georgette's little blue tunic. So much the better. But who then was the culprit? What was the ground—what the origin—what the perfect explanation of the whole business? Some points had been cleared, but how many yet remained obscure as night!

"However," I said to myself, "it is no affair of yours;" and turning from the face on which I had been unconsciously dwelling with a questioning gaze, I looked through the window which commanded the garden below. Dr. John, meantime, standing by the bedside, was slowly drawing on his gloves and watching his little patient, as her

eyes closed and her rosy lips parted in coming sleep. I waited till he could depart as usual, with a quick bow and scarce articulate "good-night." Just as he took his hat, my eyes, fixed on the tall houses bounding the garden, saw the one lattice, already commemorated, cautiously open; forth from the aperture projected a hand and a white handkerchief; both waved, I know not whether the signal was answered from some viewless quarter of our own dwelling; but immediately after there fluttered from the lattice a falling object, white and light—billet the second, of course.

"There!" I ejaculated involuntarily.

"Where?" asked Dr. John with energy, making direct for the window. "What is it?"

"They have gone and done it again," was my reply. "A handkerchief waved and something fell:" and I pointed to the lattice, now closed and looking hypocritically blank.

"Go at once; pick it up and bring it here," was his prompt direction; adding, "Nobody will take notice of *you: I* should be seen."

Straight I went. After some little search, I found a folded paper, lodged on the lower branch of a shrub; I seized and brought it direct to Dr. John. This time, I believe not even Rosine saw me.

He instantly tore the billet into small pieces, without reading it.

"It is not in the least *her* fault, you must remember," he said, looking at me.

"*Whose* fault?" I asked. "*Who* is it?"

"You don't yet know, then?"

"Not in the least."

"Have you no guess?"

"None."

"If I knew you better, I might be tempted to risk some confidence, and thus secure you as guardian over a most innocent and excellent, but somewhat inexperienced being."

"As a duenna?" I asked.

"Yes," said he abstractedly. "What snares are round her!" he added, musingly: and now, certainly for the first time, he examined my face, anxious, doubtless, to see if any kindly expression there would warrant him in recommending to my care and indulgence some ethereal creature, against whom powers of darkness were plotting. I felt no particular vocation to undertake the surveillance of ethereal creatures; but recalling the scene at the bureau, it seemed to me that I owed *him* a good turn: if I *could* help him then I would, and it lay not with me to decide how. With as little reluctance as might be, I intimated that "I was willing to do what I could towards taking care of any person in whom he might be interested."

"I am no farther interested than as a spectator," said he, with a modesty, admirable, as I thought, to witness. "I happen to be acquainted with the rather worthless character of the

person who, from the house opposite, has now twice invaded the sanctity of this place; I have also met in society the object at whom these vulgar attempts are aimed. Her exquisite superiority and innate refinement ought, one would think, to scare impertinence from her very idea. It is not so, however; and innocent, unsuspicious, as she is, I would guard her from evil if I could. In person, however, I can do nothing: I cannot come near her"—he paused.

"Well, I am willing to help you," said I, "only tell me how." And busily, in my own mind, I ran over the list of our inmates, seeking this paragon, this pearl of great price, this gem without flaw. "It must be Madame," I concluded. "*She* only, amongst us all, has the art even to *seem* superior: but as to being unsuspicious, inexperienced, &c., Dr. John need not distract himself about that. However, this is just his whim, and I will not contradict him; he shall be humoured: his angel shall be an angel."

"Just notify the quarter to which my care is to be directed," I continued gravely: chuckling, however, to myself over the thought of being set to chaperon Madame Beck or any of her pupils.

Now Dr. John had a fine set of nerves, and he at once felt by instinct, what no more coarsely constituted mind would have detected; namely, that I was a little amused at him. The colour rose

to his cheek; with half a smile he turned and took his hat—he was going. My heart smote me.

"I will—I will help you," said I eagerly. "I will do what you wish. I will watch over your angel; I will take care of her, only tell me who she is."

"But you *must* know," said he, then with earnestness, yet speaking very low. "So spotless, so good, so unspeakably beautiful! Impossible that one house should contain two like her. I allude, of course—"

Here the latch of Madame Beck's chamber-door (opening into the nursery) gave a sudden click, as if the hand holding it had been slightly convulsed; there was the suppressed explosion of an irrepressible sneeze. These little accidents will happen to the best of us. Madame—excellent woman!—was then on duty. She had come home quietly, stolen upstairs on tip-toe; she was in her chamber. If she had not sneezed, she would have heard all, and so should I; but that unlucky sternutation routed Dr. John. While he stood aghast, she came forward alert, composed, in the best yet most tranquil spirits: no novice to her habits but would have thought she had just come in, and scouted the idea of her ear having been glued to the key-hole for at least ten minutes. She affected to sneeze again, declared she was "enrhumée," and then proceeded volubly to recount her "courses en fiacre." The prayer-bell rang and I left her with the doctor.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FÊTE.

As soon as Georgette was well, Madame sent her away into the country. I was sorry; I loved the child, and her loss made me poorer than before. But I must not complain. I lived in a house full of robust life; I might have had companions, and I chose solitude. Each of the teachers in turn made me overtures of special intimacy; I tried them all. One I found to be an honest woman, but a narrow thinker, a coarse feeler, and an egotist. The second was a Parisienne, externally refined—at heart, corrupt—without a creed, without a principle, without an affection: having penetrated the outward crust of decorum in this character, you found a slough beneath. She had a wonderful passion for presents; and, in this point, the third teacher—a person otherwise characterless and insignificant—closely resembled her. This last-named had also one other distinctive property—that of avarice. In her reigned the love of money for its own sake. The sight of a piece of gold would bring into her eyes a

green glisten, singular to witness. She once, as a mark of high favour, took me upstairs, and, opening a secret door, showed me a hoard—a mass of coarse, large coin—about fifteen guineas, in five-franc pieces. She loved this hoard as a bird loves its eggs. These were her savings. She would come and talk to me about them with an infatuated and persevering dotage, strange to behold in a person not yet twenty-five.

The Parisienne, on the other hand, was prodigal and profligate (in disposition, that is: as to action, I do not know). That little quality showed its snake-head to me but once, peeping out very cautiously. A curious kind of reptile it seemed, judging from the glimpse I got; its novelty whetted my curiosity: if it would have come out boldly, perhaps I might philosophically have stood my ground, and coolly surveyed the long thing from forked tongue to scaly tail-tip: but it merely rustled in the leaves of a bad novel; and, on encountering a hasty and ill-advised demonstration of wrath, recoiled and vanished, hissing. She hated me from that day.

This Parisienne was always in debt; her salary being anticipated, not only in dress, but in perfumes, cosmetics, confectionery, and condiments. What a cold, callous, epicure she was in all things! I see her now. Thin in face and figure, sallow in complexion, regular in features, with perfect teeth, lips like a thread, a large, prominent chin, a well-opened, but frozen eye, of light at once craving and

ingrate. She mortally hated work, and loved what she called pleasure; being an insipid, heartless, brainless, dissipation of time.

Madame Beck knew this woman's character perfectly well. She once talked to me about her, with an odd mixture of discrimination, indifference, and antipathy. I asked why she kept her in the establishment. She answered plainly, "because it suited her interest to do so;" and pointed out a fact I had already noticed, namely, that Mademoiselle St. Pierre possessed, in an almost unique degree, the power of keeping order amongst her undisciplined ranks of scholars. A certain petrifying influence accompanied and surrounded her: without passion, noise, or violence, she held them in check as a breezeless frost-air might still a brawling stream. She was of little use as far as communication of knowledge went, but for strict surveillance and maintenance of rules she was invaluable. "Je sais bien qu'elle n'a pas de principes, ni, peutêtre, de mœurs," admitted Madame frankly; but added with philosophy, "son maintien en classe est toujours convenable et rempli même d'une certaine dignité: c'est tout ce qu'il faut. Ni les élèves ni les parents ne regardent plus loin; ni, par conséquent, moi non plus."

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A strange, frolicsome, noisy little world was this school; great pains were taken to hide chains with flowers; a subtle essence of Romanism pervaded

every arrangement: large sensual indulgence (so to speak) was permitted by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint. Each mind was being reared in slavery; but, to prevent reflection from dwelling on this fact, every pretext for physical recreation was seized and made the most of. There, as elsewhere, the CHURCH strove to bring up her children, robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning. "Eat, drink, and live!" she says. "Look after your bodies; leave your souls to me. I hold their cure—guide their course: I guarantee their final fate." A bargain, in which every true Catholic deems himself a gainer. Lucifer just offers the same terms: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of it; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine!"

About this time—in the ripest glow of summer—Madame Beck's house became as merry a place as a school could well be. All day long the broad folding-doors and the two-leaved casements stood wide open: settled sunshine seemed naturalized in the atmosphere; clouds were far off, sailing away beyond sea, resting, no doubt, round islands such as England—that dear land of mists—but withdrawn wholly from the drier continent. We lived far more in the garden than under a roof: classes were held, and meals partaken of, in the "grand berceau." Moreover, there was a note of holiday preparation,

which almost turned freedom into licence. The autumnal long vacation was but two months distant; but before that, a great day—an important ceremony—none other than the fête of Madame—awaited celebration.

The conduct of this fête devolved chiefly on Mademoiselle St. Pierre; Madame herself being supposed to stand aloof, disinterestedly unconscious of what might be going forward in her honour. Especially, she never knew, never in the least suspected, that a subscription was annually levied on the whole school for the purchase of a handsome present. The polite tact of the reader will please to leave out of the account a brief, secret consultation on this point in Madame's own chamber.

"What will you have this year?" was asked by her Parisian lieutenant.

"Oh, no matter! Let it alone. Let the poor children keep their francs." And Madame looked benign and modest.

The St. Pierre would here protrude her chin; she knew Madame by heart; she always called her airs of "bonté"—"des grimaces." She never even professed to respect them one instant.

"Vite!" she would say coldly. "Name the article. Shall it be jewellery or porcelain, haberdashery or silver?"

"Eh bien! Deux ou trois cuillers et autant de fourchettes en argent."

And the result was a handsome case, containing 300 francs worth of plate.

The programme of the fête-day's proceedings comprised : Presentation of plate, collation in the garden, dramatic performance (with pupils and teachers for actors), a dance and supper Very gorgeous seemed the effect of the whole to me, as I well remember. Zélie St. Pierre understood these things and managed them ably.

The play was the main point ; a month's previous drilling being there required. The choice, too, of the actors required knowledge and care ; then came lessons in elocution, in attitude, and then the fatigue of countless rehearsals. For all this, as may well be supposed, St. Pierre did not suffice : other management, other accomplishments than hers were requisite here. They were supplied in the person of a master—M. Paul Emanuel, professor of literature. It was never my lot to be present at the histrionic lessons of M. Paul, but I often saw him as he crossed the *carré* (a square hall between the dwelling-house and the school-house). I heard him too, in the warm evenings, lecturing with open doors, and his name, with anecdotes of him, resounded in one's ears from all sides. Especially our former acquaintance, Miss Ginevra Fanshawe, who had been selected to take a prominent part in the play—used, in bestowing upon me a large portion of her leisure, to lard her discourse with frequent allusions to his sayings and doings. She

esteemed him hideously plain, and used to profess herself frightened almost into hysterics at the sound of his step or voice. A dark little man he certainly was; pungent and austere. Even to me he seemed a harsh apparition, with his close-shorn, black head, his broad, sallow brow, his thin cheek, his wide and quivering nostril, his thorough glance, and hurried bearing. Irritable he was; one heard that, as he apostrophized with vehemence the awkward squad under his orders. Sometimes he would break out on these raw amateur actresses with a passion of impatience at their falseness of conception, their coldness of emotion, their feebleness of delivery. "Écoutez!" he would cry; and then his voice rang through the premises like a trumpet; and when, mimicking it, came the small pipe of a Ginevra, a Mathilde, or a Blanche, one understood why a hollow groan of scorn, or a fierce hiss of rage, rewarded the tame echo.

"Vous n'êtes donc que des poupées?" I heard him thunder. "Vous n'avez pas de passions—vous autres? Vous ne sentez donc rien? Votre chair est de neige, votre sang de glace? Moi, je veux que tout cela s'allume, qu'il ait une vie, une âme!"

Vain resolve! And when he at last found it *was* vain, he suddenly broke the whole business down. Hitherto he had been teaching them a grand tragedy; he tore the tragedy in morsels, and came next day with a compact little comic trifle. To this they took more kindly; he presently knocked it all into their smooth round pates.

Mademoiselle St. Pierre always presided at M. Emanuel's lessons, and I was told that the polish of her manner, her seeming attention, her tact and grace, impressed that gentleman very favourably. She had, indeed, the art of pleasing, for a given time, whom she would; but the feeling would not last: in an hour it was dried like dew, vanished like gossamer.

The day preceding Madame's fête was as much a holiday as the fête itself. It was devoted to clearing out, cleaning, arranging and decorating the three school-rooms. All within doors was the gayest bustle; neither upstairs nor down, could a quiet, isolated person find rest for the sole of her foot; accordingly, for my part, I took refuge in the garden. The whole day did I wander or sit there alone, finding warmth in the sun, shelter among the trees, and a sort of companionship in my own thoughts. I well remember that I exchanged but two sentences that day with any living being: not that I felt solitary; I was glad to be quiet. For a looker-on, it sufficed to pass through the rooms once or twice, observe what changes were being wrought, how a green-room and a dressing-room were being contrived, a little stage with scenery erected, how M. Paul Emanuel, in conjunction with Mademoiselle St. Pierre, was directing all, and how an eager band of pupils, amongst them Ginevra Fanshawe, were working gaily under his control.

The great day arrived. The sun rose hot and unclouded, and hot and unclouded it burned on till

evening. All the doors and all the windows were set open, which gave a pleasant sense of summer freedom—and freedom the most complete seemed indeed the order of the day. Teachers and pupils descended to breakfast in dressing-gowns and curl-papers : anticipating "avec délices" the toilette of the evening, they seemed to take a pleasure in indulging that forenoon in a luxury of slovenliness, like aldermen fasting in preparation for a feast. About nine o'clock a.m., an important functionary, the "coiffeur," arrived. Sacrilegious to state, he fixed his headquarters in the oratory, and there, in presence of *bénitier*, candle, and crucifix, solemnized the mysteries of his art. Each girl was summoned in turn to pass through his hands ; emerging from them with head as smooth as a shell, intersected by faultless white lines, and wreathed about with Grecian plaits that shone as if lacquered. I took my turn with the rest, and could hardly believe what the glass said when I applied to it for information afterwards ; the lavished garlandry of woven brown hair amazed me—I feared it was not all my own, and it required several convincing pulls to give assurance to the contrary. I then acknowledged in the coiffeur a first-rate artist—one who certainly made the most of indifferent materials.

The oratory closed, the dormitory became the scene of ablutions, arrayings and bedizenings curiously elaborate. To me it was, and ever must be an enigma, how they contrived to spend so much

time in doing so little. The operation seemed close, intricate, prolonged: the result simple. A clear white muslin dress, a blue sash (the Virgin's colours), a pair of white, or straw-coloured kid gloves—such was the gala uniform, to the assumption whereof that houseful of teachers and pupils devoted three mortal hours. But though simple, it must be allowed the array was perfect—perfect in fashion, fit, and freshness; every head being also dressed with exquisite nicety, and a certain compact taste—suiting the full, firm comeliness of Labassecourien contours, though too stiff for any more flowing and flexible style of beauty—the general effect was, on the whole, commendable.

In beholding this diaphanous and snowy mass, I well remember feeling myself to be a mere shadowy spot on a field of light; the courage was not in me to put on a transparent white dress: something thin I must wear—the weather and rooms being too hot to give substantial fabrics sufferance, so I had sought through a dozen shops till I lit upon a crape-like material of purple-grey—the colour, in short, of dun mist, lying on a moor in bloom. My *tailleuse* had kindly made it as well as she could: because, as she judiciously observed, it was "si triste—si peu voyant," care in the fashion was the more imperative: it was well she took this view of the matter, for I had no flower, no jewel to relieve it: and, what was more, I had no natural rose of complexion.

We become oblivious of these deficiencies in the uniform routine of daily drudgery, but they *will* force upon us their unwelcome blank on those bright occasions when beauty should shine.

However, in this same gown of shadow, I felt at home and at ease; an advantage I should not have enjoyed in anything more brilliant or striking. Madame Beck, too, kept me in countenance; her dress was almost as quiet as mine, except that she wore a bracelet, and a large brooch bright with gold and fine stones. We chanced to meet on the stairs, and she gave me a nod and smile of approbation. Not that she thought I was looking well—a point unlikely to engage her interest—but she considered me dressed "convenablement," "décemment," and la Convenance et la Décence were the two calm deities of Madame's worship. She even paused, laid on my shoulder her gloved hand, holding an embroidered and perfumed handkerchief, and confided to my ear a sarcasm on the other teachers (whom she had just been complimenting to their faces). "Nothing so absurd," said she, "as for des femmes mûres 'to dress themselves like girls of fifteen'—quant à la St. Pierre, elle a l'air d'une vieille coquette qui fait l'ingénue."

Being dressed at least a couple of hours before anybody else, I felt a pleasure in betaking myself—not to the garden, where servants were busy propping up long tables, placing seats, and spreading cloths in readiness for the collation—but to the

school-rooms, now empty, quiet, cool, and clean; their walls fresh stained, their planked floors fresh scoured and scarce dry; flowers, fresh gathered, adorning the recesses in pots, and draperies, fresh hung, beautifying the great windows.

Withdrawing to the first classe, a smaller and neater room than the others, and taking from the glazed bookcase, of which I kept the key, a volume whose title promised some interest, I sat down to read. The glass door of this "classe," or school-room, opened into the large berceau; acacia-boughs caressed its panes, as they stretched across to meet a rose-bush blooming by the opposite lintel; in this rose-bush bees murmured busy and happy. I commenced reading. Just as the stilly hum, the embowering shade, the warm, lonely calm of my retreat were beginning to steal meaning from the page, vision from my eyes, and to lure me along the track of reverie, down into some deep dell of dreamland—just then, the sharpest ring of the street-door bell to which that much-tried instrument had ever thrilled, snatched me back to consciousness.

Now the bell had been ringing all the morning, as workmen, or servants, or *coiffeurs*, or *tailleuses*, went and came on their several errands. Moreover, there was good reason to expect it would ring all the afternoon, since about one hundred externes were yet to arrive in carriages or fiacres: nor could it be expected to rest during the evening, when

parents and friends would gather thronging to the play. Under these circumstances, a ring—even a sharp ring—was a matter of course: yet this particular peal had an accent of its own, which chased my dream, and startled my book from my knee.

I was stooping to pick up this last, when—firm, fast, straight—right on through vestibule—along corridor, across carré, through first division, second division, grand salle—strode a step, quick, regular, intent. The closed door of the first classe—my sanctuary—offered no obstacle; it burst open, and a paletôt and a bonnet grec filled the void; also two eyes first vaguely struck upon, and then hungrily dived into me.

"C'est cela!" said a voice. "Je la connais: c'est l'Anglaise. Tant pis. Toute Anglaise, et, par, conséquent, toute bégueule qu'elle soit—elle fera mon affaire, ou je saurai pourquoi."

Then, with a certain stern politeness (I suppose he thought I had not caught the drift of his previous uncivil mutterings), and in a jargon the most execrable that ever was heard: "Meess——, play you must: I am planted there."

"What can I do for you, M. Paul Emanuel?" I inquired: for M. Paul Emanuel it was, and in a state of no little excitement.

"Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull that night you came; I see your moyens: play you can; play you must."

"But how, M. Paul? What do you mean?"

"There is no time to be lost," he went on, now speaking in French; "and let us thrust to the wall all reluctance, all excuses, all minauderies. You must take a part."

"In the vaudeville?"

"In the vaudeville. You have said it."

I gasped, horror-struck. *What* did the little man mean?

"Listen!" he said. "The case shall be stated, and you shall then answer me Yes, or No; and according to your answer shall I ever after estimate you."

The scarce-suppressed impetus of a most irritable nature glowed in his cheek, fed with sharp shafts his glances, a nature—the injudicious, the mawkish, the hesitating, the sullen, the affected, above all, the unyielding, might quickly render violent and implacable. Silence and attention was the best balm to apply: I listened.

"The whole matter is going to fail," he began. "Louise Vanderkelkov has fallen ill—at least so her ridiculous mother asserts; for my part, I feel sure she might play if she would: it is only good-will that lacks. She was charged with a *rôle*, as you know, or do *not* know—it is equal: without that *rôle* the play is stopped. There are now but a few hours in which to learn it: not a girl in this school would hear reason, and accept the task. Forsooth, it is not an interesting, not an amiable,

part; their vile *amour-propre*—that base quality of which women have so much—would revolt from it. Englishwomen are either the best or the worst of their sex. Dieu sait que je les déteste comme la peste, ordinairement" (this between his recreant teeth). "I apply to an Englishwoman to rescue me. What is her answer—Yes, or No?"

A thousand objections rushed into my mind. The foreign language, the limited time, the public display. . . . Inclination recoiled, Ability faltered, Self-respect (that "vile quality") trembled. "Non, non, non!" said all these; but looking up at M. Paul, and seeing in his vexed, fiery, and searching eye, a sort of appeal behind all its menace, my lips dropped the word "oui." For a moment his rigid countenance relaxed with a quiver of content: quickly bent up again, however, he went on,—

"Vite à l'ouvrage! Here is the book; here is your *rôle;* read." And I read. He did not commend; at some passages he scowled and stamped. He gave me a lesson: I diligently imitated. It was a disagreeable part—a man's—an empty-headed fop's. One could put into it neither heart nor soul: I hated it. The play—a mere trifle—ran chiefly on the efforts of a brace of rivals to gain the hand of a fair coquette. One lover was called the "Ours," a good and gallant but unpolished man, a sort of diamond in the rough; the other was a butterfly, a talker, and a traitor: and I was to be the butterfly, talker, and traitor.

I did my best—which was bad, I know: it provoked M. Paul; he fumed. Putting both hands to the work, I endeavoured to do better than my best; I presume he gave me credit for good intentions; he professed to be partially content. "Ça ira!" he cried; and as voices began sounding from the garden, and white dresses fluttering among the trees, he added: "You must withdraw: you must be alone to learn this. Come with me."

Without being allowed time or power to deliberate, I found myself in the same breath convoyed along as in a species of whirlwind, upstairs, up two pair of stairs, nay, actually up three (for this fiery little man seemed as by instinct to know his way everywhere); to the solitary and lofty attic was I borne, put in and locked in, the key being on the door, and that key he took with him and vanished.

The attic was no pleasant place: I believe he did not know how unpleasant it was, or he never would have locked me in with so little ceremony. In this summer weather, it was hot as Africa; as in winter, it was always cold as Greenland. Boxes and lumber filled it; old dresses draped its unstained wall—cobwebs its unswept ceiling. Well was it known to be tenanted by rats, by black beetles, and by cockroaches—nay, rumour affirmed that the ghostly Nun of the garden had once been seen here. A partial darkness obscured one end, across which, as for deeper mystery, an old russet curtain was drawn, by way of screen to a sombre band of winter cloaks,

pendant each from its pin—like a malefactor from his gibbet. From amongst these cloaks, and behind that curtain, the Nun was said to issue. I did not believe this, nor was I troubled by apprehension thereof; but I saw a very dark and large rat, with a long tail, come gliding out from that squalid alcove; and, moreover, my eye fell on many a black beetle, dotting the floor. These objects discomposed me more, perhaps, than it would be wise to say, as also did the dust, lumber, and stifling heat of the place. The last inconvenience would soon have become intolerable, had I not found means to open and prop up the skylight, thus admitting some freshness. Underneath this aperture I pushed a large empty chest, and having mounted upon it a smaller box, and wiped from both the dust, I gathered my dress (my best, the reader must remember, and therefore a legitimate object of care) fastidiously around me, ascended this species of extempore throne, and being seated, commenced the acquisition of my task; while I learned, not forgetting to keep a sharp look-out on the black beetles and cockroaches, of which, more even, I believe, than of the rats, I sat in mortal dread.

My impression at first was that I had undertaken what it really was impossible to perform, and I simply resolved to do my best and be resigned to fail. I soon found, however, that one part in so short a piece was not more than memory could master at a few hours' notice. I learned and

learned on, first in a whisper, and then aloud. Perfectly secure from human audience, I acted my part before the garret-vermin. Entering into its emptiness, frivolity, and falsehood, with a spirit inspired by scorn and impatience, I took my revenge on this "fat," by making him as fatuitous as I possibly could.

In this exercise the afternoon passed : day began to glide into evening ; and I, who had eaten nothing since breakfast, grew excessively hungry. Now I thought of the collation, which doubtless they were just then devouring in the garden far below. (I had seen in the vestibule a basketful of small *pâtés à la crême*, than which nothing in the whole range of cookery seemed to me better.) A *pâté*, or a square of cake, it seemed to me would come very *à propos ;* and as my relish for those dainties increased, it began to appear somewhat hard that I should pass my holiday, fasting and in prison. Remote as was the attic from the street-door and vestibule, yet the ever-tinkling bell was faintly audible here ; and also the ceaseless roll of wheels on the tormented pavement. I knew that the house and garden were thronged, and that all was gay and glad below ; here it began to grow dusk ; the beetles were fading from my sight ; I trembled lest they should steal on me a march, mount my throne unseen, and unsuspected, invade my skirts. Impatient and apprehensive, I recommenced the rehearsal of my part merely to kill time. Just as I was concluding, the

long-delayed rattle of the key in the lock came to my ear—no unwelcome sound. M. Paul (I could just see through the dusk that it *was* M. Paul, for light enough still lingered to show the velvet blackness of his close-shorn head, and the sallow ivory of his brow) looked in.

"Brava!" cried he, holding the door open and remaining at the threshold. "J'ai tout entendu. C'est assez bien. Encore!"

A moment I hesitated.

"Encore!" said he sternly. "Et point de grimaces! A bas la timidité!"

Again I went through the part, but not half so well as I had spoken it alone.

"Enfin, elle sait," said he, half dissatisfied, "and one cannot be fastidious or exacting under the circumstances." Then he added, "You may yet have twenty minutes for preparation: au revoir!" And he was going.

"Monsieur," I called out, taking courage.

"Eh bien. Qu'est-ce que c'est, mademoiselle?"

"J'ai bien faim."

"Comment, vous avez faim! Et la collation?"

"I know nothing about it. I have not seen it, shut up here."

"Ah! C'est vrai," cried he.

In a moment my throne was abdicated, the attic evacuated; an inverse repetition of the impetus which had brought me up into the attic, instantly took me down—down—down to the very kitchen.

I thought I should have gone to the cellar. The cook was imperatively ordered to produce food, and I, as imperatively, was commanded to eat. To my great joy this food was limited to coffee and cake: I had feared wine and sweets, which I did not like. How he guessed that I should like a *petit pâté à la crème* I cannot tell; but he went out and procured me one from some quarter. With considerable willingness I ate and drank, keeping the *petit pâté* till the last, as a *bonne bouche*. M. Paul superintended my repast, and almost forced upon me more than I could swallow.

"A la bonne heure," he cried, when I signified that I really could take no more, and, with uplifted hands, implored to be spared the additional roll on which he had just spread butter. "You will set me down as a species of tyrant and Bluebeard, starving women in a garret; whereas, after all, I am no such thing. Now, mademoiselle, do you feel courage and strength to appear?"

I said, I thought I did; though, in truth, I was perfectly confused, and could hardly tell how I felt: but this little man was of the order of beings who must not be opposed, unless you possessed an all-dominant force sufficient to crush him at once.

"Come then," said he, offering his hand.

I gave him mine, and he set off with a rapid walk, which obliged me to run at his side in order to keep pace. In the carré he stopped a moment; it was lit with large lamps; the wide doors of the

classes were open, and so were the equally wide garden-doors ; orange-trees in tubs, and tall flowers in pots, ornamented these portals on each side ; groups of ladies and gentlemen in evening-dress stood and walked amongst the flowers. Within, the long vista of the school-rooms presented a thronging, undulating, murmuring, waving, streaming multitude, all rose, and blue, and half-translucent white. There were lustres burning overhead ; far off there was a stage, a solemn green curtain, a row of foot-lights.

"N'est-ce pas que c'est beau ?" demanded my companion.

I should have said it was, but my heart got up into my throat. M. Paul discovered this, and gave me a side-scowl and a little shake for my pains.

"I will do my best, but I wish it was over," said I ; then I asked : "Are we to walk through that crowd ?"

"By no means : I manage matters better : we pass through the garden—here."

In an instant we were out of doors : the cool, calm night revived me somewhat. It was moonless, but the reflex from the many glowing windows lit the court brightly, and even the alleys—dimly. Heaven was cloudless, and grand with the quiver of its living fires. How soft are the nights of the continent ! How bland, balmy, safe ! No sea-fog ; no chilling damp : mistless as noon, and fresh as morning.

Having crossed court and garden, we reached the glass door of the first classe. It stood open, like all other doors that night; we passed, and then I was ushered into a small cabinet, dividing the first classe from the grand salle. This cabinet dazzled me, it was so full of light: it deafened me, it was clamorous with voices: it stifled me, it was so hot, choking, thronged.

"De l'ordre! Du silence!" cried M. Paul. "Is this chaos?" he demanded; and there was a hush. With a dozen words, and as many gestures, he turned out half the persons present, and obliged the remnant to fall into rank. Those left were all in costume: they were the performers, and this was the green-room. M. Paul introduced me. All stared and some tittered. It was a surprise: they had not expected the Englishwoman would play in a *vaudeville*. Ginevra Fanshawe, beautifully dressed for her part, and looking fascinatingly pretty, turned on me a pair of eyes as round as beads. In the highest spirit, unperturbed by fear or bashfulness, delighted indeed at the thought of shining off before hundreds—my entrance seemed to transfix her with amazement in the midst of her joy. She would have exclaimed, but M. Paul held her and all the rest in check.

Having surveyed and criticized the whole troop, he turned to me.

"You, too, must be dressed for your part."

"Dressed—dressed like a man!" exclaimed Zélie

St. Pierre, darting forwards; adding with officiousness, "I will dress her myself."

To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man's name and part; as to his dress—*halte là!* No. I would keep my own dress; come what might. M. Paul might storm, might rage: I would keep my own dress. I said so, with a voice as resolute in intent, as it was low, and perhaps unsteady, in utterance.

He did not immediately storm or rage, as I fully thought he would: he stood silent. But Zélie again interposed.

"She will make a capital *petit maître*. Here are the garments, all—all complete: somewhat too large, but I will arrange all that. Come, chère amie—belle Anglaise!"

And she sneered, for I was not "belle." She seized my hand, she was drawing me away. M. Paul stood impassable—neutral.

"You must not resist," pursued St. Pierre—for resist I did. "You will spoil all, destroy the mirth of the piece, the enjoyment of the company, sacrifice everything to your *amour-propre*. This would be too bad—monsieur will never permit this!"

She sought his eye. I watched, likewise, for a glance. He gave her one, and then he gave me one. "Stop!" he said slowly, arresting St. Pierre, who continued her efforts to drag me after her.

Everybody awaited the decision. He was not angry, not irritated ; I perceived that, and took heart.

"You do not like these clothes?" he asked, pointing to the masculine vestments.

"I don't object to some of them, but I won't have them all."

"How must it be, then? How, accept a man's part, and go on the stage dressed as a woman? This is an amateur affair, it is true—a *vaudeville de pensionnat;* certain modifications I might sanction, yet something you must have to announce you as of the nobler sex."

"And I will, monsieur; but it must be arranged in my own way : nobody must meddle ; the things must not be forced upon me. Just let me dress myself."

Monsieur, without another word, took the costume from St. Pierre, gave it to me, and permitted me to pass into the dressing-room. Once alone, I grew calm, and collectedly went to work. Retaining my woman's garb without the slightest retrenchment, I merely assumed, in addition, a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletôt of small dimensions ; the whole being the costume of a brother of one of the pupils. Having loosened my hair out of its braids, made up the long back hair close, and brushed the front hair to one side, I took my hat and gloves in my hand and came out. M. Paul was waiting, and so were the others. He looked at me. "That may pass in a pensionnat," he pronounced. Then added,

not unkindly, "Courage, mon ami! Un peu de sang froid—un peu d'aplomb, M. Lucien, et tout ira bien."

St. Pierre sneered again, in her cold snaky manner.

I was irritable, because excited, and I could not help turning upon her and saying, that if she were not a lady and I a gentleman, I should feel disposed to call her out.

"After the play, after the play," said M. Paul. "I will then divide my pair of pistols between you, and we will settle the dispute according to form : it will only be the old quarrel of France and England."

But now the moment approached for the performance to commence. M. Paul, setting us before him, harangued us briefly, like a general addressing soldiers about to charge. I don't know what he said, except that he recommended each to penetrate herself with a sense of her personal insignificance. God knows I thought this advice superfluous for some of us. A bell tinkled. I and two more were ushered on to the stage. The bell tinkled again. I had to speak the very first words.

"Do not look at the crowd, nor think of it," whispered M. Paul in my ear. "Imagine yourself in the garret, acting to the rats."

He vanished. The curtain drew up—shrivelled to the ceiling : the bright lights, the long room, the gay throng, burst upon us. I thought of the black beetles, the old boxes, the worm-eaten bureaux. I

said my say badly; but I said it. That first speech was the difficulty; it revealed to me this fact, that it was not the crowd I feared so much as my own voice. Foreigners and strangers, the crowd were nothing to me. Nor did I think of them. When my tongue once got free, and my voice took its true pitch, and found its natural tone, I thought of nothing but the personage I represented—and of M. Paul, who was listening, watching, prompting in the side-scenes.

By-and-by, feeling the right power come—the spring demanded gush and rise inwardly—I became sufficiently composed to notice my fellow-actors. Some of them played very well; especially Ginevra Fanshawe, who had to coquette between two suitors, and managed admirably: in fact she was in her element. I observed that she once or twice threw a certain marked fondness and pointed partiality into her manner towards me—the fop. With such emphasis and animation did she favour me, such glances did she dart out into the listening and applauding crowd, that to me—who knew her—it presently became evident she was acting *at* some one; and I followed her eye, her smile, her gesture, and ere long discovered that she had at least singled out a handsome and distinguished aim for her shafts; full in the path of those arrows—taller than other spectators, and therefore more sure to receive them—stood in attitude quiet but intent, a well-known form—that of Dr. John.

The spectacle seemed somehow suggestive. There was language in Dr. John's look, though I cannot tell what he said; it animated me: I drew out of it a history; I put my idea into the part I performed; I threw it into my wooing of Ginevra. In the "Ours," or sincere lover, I saw Dr. John. Did I pity him, as erst? No, I hardened my heart, rivalled and out-rivalled him. I knew myself but a fop, but where *he* was outcast *I* could please. Now I know I acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer. Ginevra seconded me; between us we half-changed the nature of the *rôle*, gilding it from top to toe. Between the acts M. Paul told us he knew not what possessed us, and half expostulated. "C'est peut-être plus beau que votre modèle," said he, "mais ce n'est pas juste." I know not what possessed me either; but somehow my longing was to eclipse the "Ours," i.e. Dr. John. Ginevra was tender; how could I be otherwise than chivalric? Retaining the letter, I recklessly altered the spirit of the *rôle*. Without heart, without interest, I could not play it at all. It must be played—in went the yearned-for seasoning—thus flavoured, I played it with relish.

What I felt that night, and what I did, I no more expected to feel and do, than to be lifted in a trance to the seventh heaven. Cold, reluctant, apprehensive, I had accepted a part to please another: ere long, warming, becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself. Yet the

next day, when I thought it over, I quite disapproved of these amateur performances; and though glad that I had obliged M. Paul, and tried my own strength for once, I took a firm resolution never to be drawn into a similar affair. A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life: the strength and longing must be put by; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked.

No sooner was the play over and *well* over, than the choleric and arbitrary M. Paul underwent a metamorphosis. His hour of managerial responsibility past, he at once laid aside his magisterial austerity; in a moment he stood amongst us, vivacious, kind, and social, shook hands with us all round, thanked us separately, and announced his determination that each of us should in turn be his partner in the coming ball. On his claiming my promise, I told him I did not dance. "For once I must," was the answer; and if I had not slipped aside and kept out of his way, he would have compelled me to this second performance. But I had acted enough for one evening; it was time I retired into myself and my ordinary life. My dun-coloured dress did well enough under a paletôt on the stage, but would not suit a waltz or a quadrille. Withdrawing to a quiet

nook, whence unobserved I could observe—the ball, its splendours and its pleasures, passed before me as a spectacle.

Again, Ginevra Fanshawe was the belle, the fairest and the gayest present ; she was selected to open the ball : very lovely she looked, very gracefully she danced, very joyously she smiled. Such scenes were her triumphs—she was the child of pleasure. Work or suffering found her listless and dejected, powerless and repining ; but gaiety expanded her butterfly's wings, lit up their gold-dust and bright spots, made her flash like a gem, and flush like a flower. At all ordinary diet and plain beverage she would pout ; but she fed on creams and ices like a humming-bird on honey-paste : sweet wine was her element, and sweet cake her daily bread. Ginevra lived her full life in a ball-room ; elsewhere she drooped dispirited.

Think not reader, that she thus bloomed and sparkled for the mere sake of M. Paul, her partner, or that she lavished her best graces that night for the edification of her companions only, or for that of the parents and grand-parents, who filled the carré and lined the ball-room ; under circumstances so insipid and limited, with motives so chilly and vapid, Ginevra would scarce have deigned to walk one quadrille, and weariness and fretfulness would have replaced animation and good-humour, but she knew of a leaven in the otherwise heavy festal mass which lighted the whole ; she tasted a condiment

which gave it zest ; she perceived reasons justifying the display of her choicest attractions.

In the ball-room, indeed, not a single male spectator was to be seen who was not married and a father—M. Paul excepted—that gentleman, too, being the sole creature of his sex permitted to lead out a pupil to the dance ; and this exceptional part was allowed him, partly, as a matter of old-established custom (for he was a kinsman of Madame Beck's and high in her confidence), partly because he would always have his own way and do as he pleased, and partly because—wilful, passionate, partial, as he might be—he was the soul of honour, and might be trusted with a regiment of the fairest and purest, in perfect security that under his leadership they would come to no harm. Many of the girls—it may be noted in parenthesis—were not pure-minded at all, very much otherwise ; but they no more dare betray their natural coarseness in M. Paul's presence, than they dare tread purposely on his corns, laugh in his face during a stormy apostrophe, or speak above their breath while some crisis of irritability was covering his human visage with the mask of an intelligent tiger. M. Paul, then, might dance with whom he would—and woe be to the interference which put him out of step.

Others there were admitted as spectators—with (seeming) reluctance, through prayers, by influence, under restriction, by special and difficult exercise of

Madame Beck's gracious good-nature, and whom she all the evening—with her own personal surveillance—kept far aloof at the remotest, dreariest, coldest, darkest side of the carré—a small, forlorn band of "jeunes gens"; these being all of the best families, grown-up sons of mothers present, and whose sisters were pupils in the school. That whole evening was Madame on duty beside these "jeunes gens"—attentive to them as a mother, but strict with them as a dragon. There was a sort of cordon sketched before them, which they wearied her with prayers to be permitted to pass, and just to revive themselves by one dance with that "belle blonde," or that "jolie brune," or "cette jeune fille magnifique aux cheveux noirs comme le jais."

"Taisez-vous!" Madame would reply, heroically and inexorably. "Vous ne passerez pas à moins que ce ne soit sur mon cadavre, et vous ne danserez qu'avec la nonnette du jardin" (alluding to the legend). And she majestically walked to and fro along their disconsolate and impatient line, like a little Bonaparte in a mouse-coloured silk gown.

Madame knew something of the world; Madame knew much of human nature. I don't think that another directress in Villette would have dared to admit a "jeune homme" within her walls; but Madame knew that by granting such admission, on an occasion like the present, a bold stroke might be struck, and a great point gained.

In the first place, the parents were made accomplices to the deed, for it was only through their mediation it was brought about. Secondly: the admission of these rattlesnakes, so fascinating and so dangerous, served to draw out Madame precisely in her strongest character—that of a first-rate *surveillante*. Thirdly: their presence furnished a most piquant ingredient to the entertainment: the pupils knew it, and saw it, and the view of such golden apples shining afar off, animated them with a spirit no other circumstance could have kindled. The children's pleasure spread to the parents; life and mirth circulated quickly round the ball-room; the "jeunes gens" themselves, though restrained, were amused: for Madame never permitted them to feel dull—and thus Madame Beck's fête annually ensured a success unknown to the fête of any other directress in the land.

I observed that Dr. John was at first permitted to walk at large through the classes: there was about him a manly, responsible look, that redeemed his youth, and half-expiated his beauty; but as soon as the ball began, Madame ran up to him.

"Come, Wolf; come," said she, laughing. "You wear sheep's clothing, but you must quit the fold notwithstanding. Come; I have a fine menagerie of twenty here in the carré: let me place you amongst my collection."

"But first suffer me to have one dance with one pupil of my choice."

"Have you the face to ask such a thing? It is madness: it is impiety. Sortez, sortez, au plus vite."

She drove him before her, and soon had him enclosed within the cordon.

Ginevra being, I suppose, tired with dancing, sought me out in my retreat. She threw herself on the bench beside me, and (a demonstration I could very well have dispensed with) cast her arms round my neck.

"Lucy Snowe! Lucy Snowe!" she cried in a somewhat sobbing voice, half-hysterical.

"What in the world is the matter?" I dryly said.

"How do I look—how do I look to-night?" she demanded.

"As usual," said I; "preposterously vain."

"Caustic creature! You never have a kind word for me; but in spite of you, and all other envious detractors, I know I am beautiful; I feel it, I see it—for there is a great looking-glass in the dressing-room, where I can view my shape from head to foot. Will you go with me now, and let us two stand before it?"

"I will, Miss Fanshawe: you shall be humoured even to the top of your bent."

The dressing-room was very near, and we stepped in. Putting her arm through mine, she drew me to the mirror. Without resistance, remonstrance, or remark, I stood and let her self-love have its feast

and triumph: curious to see how much it could swallow—whether it was possible it could feed to satiety—whether any whisper of consideration for others could penetrate her heart, and moderate its vain-glorious exultation.

Not at all. She turned me and herself round; she viewed us both on all sides; she smiled, she waved her curls, she retouched her sash, she spread her dress, and finally, letting go my arm, and curtseying with mock respect, she said,—

"I would not be you for a kingdom."

The remark was too *naïve* to rouse anger; I merely said,—

"Very good."

"And what would *you* give to be ME?" she inquired.

"Not a bad sixpence—strange as it may sound," I replied. "You are but a poor creature."

"You don't think so in your heart."

"No: for in my heart you have not the outline of a place; I only occasionally turn you over in my brain."

"Well, but," said she, in an expostulatory tone, "just listen to the difference of our positions, and then see how happy am I, and how miserable are you."

"Go on; I listen."

"In the first place: I am the daughter of a gentleman of family, and though my father is not rich, I have expectations from an uncle. Then, I

am just eighteen, the finest age possible. I have had a continental education, and though I can't spell, I have abundant accomplishments. I *am* pretty; *you* can't deny that; I may have as many admirers as I choose. This very night I have been breaking the hearts of two gentlemen, and it is the dying look I had from one of them just now, which puts me in such spirits. I do so like to watch them turn red and pale, and scowl and dart fiery glances at each other, and languishing ones at me. There is *me*—happy ME; now for *you*, poor soul.

"I suppose you are nobody's daughter, since you took care of little children when you first came to Villette: you have no relations; you can't call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments—no beauty. As to admirers, you hardly know what they are; you can't even talk on the subject: you sit dumb when the other teachers quote their conquests. I believe you never were in love, and never will be; you don't know the feeling: and so much the better, for though you might have your own heart broken, no living heart will you ever break. Isn't it all true?"

"A good deal of it is true as gospel, and shrewd besides. There must be good in you, Ginevra, to speak so honestly; that snake, Zélie St. Pierre, could not utter what you have uttered. Still, Miss Fanshawe, hapless as I am, according to your showing, sixpence I would not give to purchase you, body and soul."

"Just because I am not clever, and that is all *you* think of. Nobody in the world but you cares for cleverness."

"On the contrary, I consider you *are* clever, in your way—very smart indeed. But you were talking of breaking hearts—that edifying amusement into the merits of which I don't quite enter; pray on whom does your vanity lead you to think you have done execution to-night?"

She approached her lips to my ear—"Isidore and Alfred de Hamal are both here," she whispered.

"Oh! they are? I should like to see them."

"There's a dear creature! your curiosity is roused at last. Follow me, I will point them out."

She proudly led the way—"But you cannot see them well from the classes," said she, turning, "Madame keeps them too far off. Let us cross the garden, enter by the corridor, and get close to them behind: we shall be scolded if we are seen, but never mind."

For once, I did not mind. Through the garden we went—penetrated into the corridor by a quiet private entrance, and approaching the carré, yet keeping in the corridor shade, commanded a near view of the band of "jeunes gens."

I believe I could have picked out the conquering de Hamal even undirected. He was a straight-nosed, very correct-featured little dandy. I say *little* dandy, though he was not beneath the middle standard in stature; but his lineaments were small,

and so were his hands and feet; and he was pretty and smooth, and as trim as a doll: so nicely dressed, so nicely curled, so booted and gloved and cravated—he was charming indeed. I said so: "What a dear personage!" cried I, and commended Ginevra's taste warmly; and asked her what she thought de Hamal might have done with the precious fragments of that heart she had broken —whether he kept them in a scent-vial and conserved them in otto of roses? I observed, too, with deep rapture of approbation, that the colonel's hands were scarce larger than Miss Fanshawe's own, and suggested that this circumstance might be convenient, as he could wear her gloves at a pinch. On his dear curls, I told her I doted: and as to his low, Grecian brow, and exquisite classic headpiece, I confessed I had no language to do such perfections justice.

"And if he were your lover?" suggested the cruelly exultant Ginevra.

"Oh! heavens, what bliss!" said I; "but do not be inhuman, Miss Fanshawe: to put such thoughts into my head is like showing poor outcast Cain a far glimpse of Paradise."

"You like him, then?"

"As I like sweets, and jams, and comfits, and conservatory flowers."

Ginevra admired my taste, for all these things were her adoration; she could then readily credit that they were mine too.

"Now for Isidore," I went on. I own I felt still more curious to see him than his rival; but Ginevra was absorbed in the latter.

"Alfred was admitted here to-night," said she, "through the influence of his aunt, Madame la Baronne de Dorlodot; and now, having seen him, can you not understand why I have been in such spirits all the evening, and acted so well, and danced with such life, and why I am now happy as a queen? Dieu! Dieu! It was such good fun to glance first at him and then at the other, and madden them both."

"But that other—where is he? Show me Isidore."

"I don't like."

"Why not?"

"I am ashamed of him."

"For what reason?"

"Because—because" (in a whisper) "he has such whiskers, orange—red—there now!"

"The murder is out," I subjoined. "Never mind, show him all the same; I engage not to faint."

She looked round. Just then an English voice spoke behind her and me.

"You are both standing in a draught; you must leave this corridor."

"There is no draught, Dr. John," said I, turning.

"She takes cold so easily," he pursued, looking at Ginevra with extreme kindness. "She is delicate; she must be cared for: fetch her a shawl."

"Permit me to judge for myself," said Miss Fanshawe, with hauteur. "I want no shawl."

"Your dress is thin, you have been dancing, you are heated."

"Always preaching," retorted she; "always coddling and admonishing."

The answer Dr. John would have given did not come; that his heart was hurt became evident in his eye; darkened, and saddened, and pained, he turned a little aside, but was patient. I knew where there were plenty of shawls near at hand; I ran and fetched one.

"She shall wear this if I have strength to make her," said I, folding it well round her muslin dress, covering carefully her neck and arms. "Is that Isidore?" I asked, in a somewhat fierce whisper.

She pushed up her lip, smiled, and nodded.

"Is *that* Isidore?" I repeated, giving her a shake: I could have given her a dozen.

"C'est lui-même," said she. "How coarse he is, compared with the Colonel-Count! And then—oh, ciel!—the whiskers!"

Dr. John now passed on.

"The Colonel-Count!" I echoed. "The doll—the puppet—the manikin—the poor inferior creature! A mere lackey for Dr. John: his valet, his foot-boy? Is it possible that fine generous gentleman—handsome as a vision—offers you his honourable hand and gallant heart, and promises to protect your flimsy person and wretchless

mind through the storms and struggles of life—and you hang back—you scorn, you sting, you torture him? Have you power to do this? Who gave you that power? Where is it? Does it lie all in your beauty—your pink-and-white complexion, and your yellow hair? Does this bind his soul at your feet, and bend his neck under your yoke? Does this purchase for you his affection, his tenderness, his thoughts, his hopes, his interest, his noble, cordial love—and will you not have it? Do you scorn it? You are only dissembling: you are not in earnest; you love him; you long for him; but you trifle with his heart to make him more surely yours?"

"Bah! How you run on! I don't understand half you have said."

I had got her out into the garden ere this. I now set her down on a seat and told her she should not stir till she had avowed which she meant in the end to accept—the man or the monkey.

"Him you call the man," said she, "is bourgeois, sandy-haired, and answers to the name of John! —cela suffit: je n'en veux pas. Colonel de Hamal is a gentleman of excellent connections, perfect manners, sweet appearance, with pale interesting face, and hair and eyes like an Italian. Then too he is the most delightful company possible—a man quite in my way, not sensible and serious like the other, but one with whom I can talk on equal terms—who does not plague and bore, and harass

me with depths, and heights, and passions, and talents for which I have no taste. There now. Don't hold me so fast."

I slackened my grasp, and she darted off. I did not care to pursue her.

Somehow I could not avoid returning once more in the direction of the corridor to get another glimpse of Dr. John ; but I met him on the garden-steps, standing where the light from a window fell broad. His well-proportioned figure was not to be mistaken, for I doubt whether there was another in that assemblage his equal. He carried his hat in his hand ; his uncovered head, his face and fine brow were most handsome and manly. *His* features were not delicate, not slight like those of a woman, nor were they cold, frivolous, and feeble ; though well cut, they were not so chiselled, so frittered away, as to lose in power and significance what they gained in unmeaning symmetry. Much feeling spoke in them at times, and more sat silent in his eye. Such at least were my thoughts of him : to me he seemed all this. An inexpressible sense of wonder occupied me as I looked at this man, and reflected that *he* could not be slighted.

It was not my intention to approach or address him in the garden, our terms of acquaintance not warranting such a step ; I had only meant to view him in the crowd—myself unseen : coming upon him thus alone, I withdrew. But he was looking out for me, or rather for her who had been with me : there-

fore he descended the steps, and followed me down the alley.

"You know Miss Fanshawe? I have often wished to ask whether you knew her," said he.

"Yes: I know her."

"Intimately?"

"Quite as intimately as I wish."

"What have you done with her now?"

"Am I her keeper?" I felt inclined to ask; but I simply answered, "I have shaken her well, and would have shaken her better, but she escaped out of my hands and ran away."

"Would you favour me," he asked, "by watching over her this one evening, and observing that she does nothing imprudent—does not, for instance, run out into the night-air immediately after dancing?"

"I may, perhaps, look after her a little, since you wish it; but she likes her own way too well to submit readily to control."

"She is so young, so thoroughly artless," said he.

"To me she is an enigma," I responded.

"Is she?" he asked—much interested. "How?"

"It would be difficult to say how—difficult, at least, to tell *you* how."

"And why me?"

"I wonder she is not better pleased that you are so much her friend."

"But she has not the slightest idea how much I

am her friend. That is precisely the point I cannot teach her. May I inquire did she ever speak of me to you?"

"Under the name of 'Isidore' she has talked about you often; but I must add that it is only within the last ten minutes I have discovered that you and 'Isidore' are identical. It is only, Dr. John, within that brief space of time I have learned that Ginevra Fanshawe is the person, under this roof, in whom you have long been interested—that she is the magnet which attracts you to the Rue Fossette, that for her sake you venture into this garden, and seek out caskets dropped by rivals."

"You know all?"

"I know so much."

"For more than a year I have been accustomed to meet her in society. Mrs. Cholmondeley, her friend, is an acquaintance of mine; thus I see her every Sunday. But you observed that under the name of 'Isidore' she often spoke of me: may I—without inviting you to a breach of confidence—inquire what was the tone, what the feeling of her remarks? I feel somewhat anxious to know, being a little tormented with uncertainty as to how I stand with her."

"Oh, she varies: she shifts and changes like the wind."

"Still, you can gather some general idea—?"

"I can," thought I, "but it would not do to communicate that general idea to you. Besides, if I

said she did not love you, I know you would not believe me."

"You are silent," he pursued. "I suppose you have no good news to impart. No matter. If she feels for me positive coldness and aversion, it is a sign I do not deserve her."

"Do you doubt yourself? Do you consider yourself the inferior of Colonel de Hamal?"

"I love Miss Fanshawe far more than de Hamal loves any human being, and would care for and guard her better than he. Respecting de Hamal, I fear she is under an illusion; the man's character is known to me, all his antecedents, all his scrapes. He is not worthy of your beautiful young friend."

"My 'beautiful young friend' ought to know that, and to know or feel who is worthy of her," said I. "If her beauty or her brains will not serve her so far, she merits the sharp lesson of experience."

"Are you not a little severe?"

"I am excessively severe—more severe than I choose to show you. You should hear the strictures with which I favour my 'beautiful young friend,' only that you would be unutterably shocked at my want of tender considerateness for her delicate nature."

"She is so lovely, one cannot but be loving towards her. You—every woman older than herself, must feel for such a simple, innocent, girlish fairy a sort of motherly or elder-sisterly fondness. Graceful

angel! Does not your heart yearn towards her when she pours into your ear her pure, childlike confidences? How you are privileged!" And he sighed.

"I cut short these confidences somewhat abruptly now and then," said I. "But excuse me, Dr. John, may I change the theme for one instant? What a god-like person is that de Hamal! What a nose on his face—perfect! Model one in putty or clay, you could not make a better or straighter, or neater; and then, such classic lips and chin—and his bearing—sublime!"

"De Hamal is an unutterable puppy, besides being a very white-livered hero."

"You, Dr. John, and every man of a less refined mould than he, must feel for him a sort of admiring affection, such as Mars and the coarser deities may be supposed to have borne the young, graceful Apollo."

"An unprincipled, gambling, little jackanapes!" said Dr. John curtly, "whom, with one hand, I could lift up by the waistband any day, and lay low in the kennel if I liked."

"The sweet seraph!" said I. "What a cruel idea! Are you not a little severe, Dr. John?"

And now I paused. For the second time that night I was going beyond myself—venturing out of what I looked on as my natural habits—speaking in an unpremeditated, impulsive strain, which startled me strangely when I halted to reflect. On rising

that morning, had I anticipated that before night I should have acted the part of a gay lover in a vaudeville; and an hour later, frankly discussed with Dr. John the question of his hapless suit, and rallied him on his illusions? I had no more presaged such feats than I had looked forward to an ascent in a balloon, or a voyage to Cape Horn.

The doctor and I, having paced down the walk, were now returning; the reflex from the window again lit his face: he smiled, but his eye was melancholy. How I wished that he could feel heart's-ease! How I grieved that he brooded over pain, and pain from such a cause! He, with his great advantages, *he* to love in vain! I did not then know that the pensiveness of reverse is the best phase for some minds; nor did I reflect that some herbs, "though scentless when entire, yield fragrance when they're bruised."

"Do not be sorrowful, do not grieve," I broke out. "If there is in Ginevra one spark of worthiness of your affection, she will—she *must* feel devotion in return. Be cheerful, be hopeful, Dr. John. Who should hope, if not you?"

In return for this speech I got—what, it must be supposed, I deserved, a look of surprise: I thought also of some disapprobation. We parted, and I went into the house very chill. The clocks struck and the bells tolled midnight; people were leaving fast: the fête was over; the lamps were

fading. In another hour all the dwelling-house and all the pensionnat were dark and hushed. I too was in bed, but not asleep. To me it was not easy to sleep after a day of such excitement.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LONG VACATION.

Following Madame Beck's fête, with its three preceding weeks of relaxation, its brief twelve hours' burst of hilarity and dissipation, and its one subsequent day of utter languor, came a period of reaction ; two months of real application, of close, hard study. These two months, being the last of the "année scolaire," were indeed the only genuine working months in the year. To them was procrastinated—into them concentrated, alike by professors, mistresses, and pupils—the main burden of preparation for the examinations preceding the distribution of prizes. Candidates for rewards had then to work in good earnest ; masters and teachers had to set their shoulders to the wheel, to urge on the backward, and diligently aid and train the more promising. A showy demonstration—a telling exhibition—must be got up for public view, and all means were fair to this end.

I scarcely noted how the other teachers went to work ; I had my own business to mind ; and *my*

task was not the least onerous, being to imbue some ninety sets of brains with a due tincture of what they considered a most complicated and difficult science, that of the English language ; and to drill ninety tongues in what, for them, was an almost impossible pronunciation—the lisping and hissing dentals of the isles.

The examination-day arrived. Awful day ! Prepared for with anxious care, dressed for with silent despatch—nothing vaporous or fluttering now—no white gauze or azure streamers ; the grave, close, compact was the order of the toilette. It seemed to me that I was this day especially doomed—the main burden and trial falling on me alone of all the female teachers. The others were not expected to examine in the studies they taught ; the professor of literature, M. Paul, taking upon himself this duty. He, this school autocrat, gathered all and sundry reins into the hollow of his one hand ; he irefully rejected any colleague, he would not have help. Madame herself, who evidently rather wished to undertake the examination in geography—her favourite study, which she taught well—was forced to succumb, and be subordinate to her despotic kinsman's direction. The whole staff of instructors, male and female, he set aside, and stood on the examiner's estrade alone. It irked him that he was forced to make one exception to this rule. He could not manage English : he was obliged to leave that branch of education in the English teacher's

hands; which he did, not without a flash of naïve jealousy.

A constant crusade against the "amour-propre" of every human being but himself, was the crotchet of this able, but fiery and grasping little man. He had a strong relish for public representation in his own person, but an extreme abhorrence of the like display in any other. He quelled, he kept down when he could; and when he could not, he fumed like a bottled storm.

On the evening preceding the examination-day, I was walking in the garden, as were the other teachers and all the boarders. M. Emanuel joined me in the "allée défendue"; his cigar was at his lips; his paletôt—a most characteristic garment of no particular shape—hung dark and menacing; the tassel of his bonnet grec sternly shadowed his left temple; his black whiskers curled like those of a wrathful cat; his blue eye had a cloud in its glitter.

"Ainsi," he began, abruptly fronting and arresting me, "vous allez trôner comme une reine; demain—trôner à mes côtés? Sans doute vous savourez d'avance les délices de l'autorité. Je crois voir en je ne sais quoi de rayonnante, petite ambitieuse!"

Now the fact was, he happened to be entirely mistaken. I did not—could not—estimate the admiration or the good opinion of to-morrow's audience at the same rate he did. Had that

audience numbered as many personal friends and acquaintances for me as for him, I know not how it might have been : I speak of the case as it stood. On me school triumphs shed but a cold lustre. I had wondered—and I wondered now—how it was that for him they seemed to shine as with hearth-warmth and hearth-glow. *He* cared for them perhaps too much ; *I*, probably too little. However, I had my own fancies as well as he. I liked, for instance, to see M. Emanuel jealous ; it lit up his nature, and woke his spirit ; it threw all sorts of queer lights and shadows over his dun face, and into his violet-azure eyes (he used to say that his black hair and blue eyes were "une de ses beautés"). There was a relish in his anger ; it was artless, earnest, quite unreasonable, but never hypocritical. I uttered no disclaimer then of the complacency he attributed to me ; I merely asked where the English examination came in —whether at the commencement or close of the day ?

"I hesitate," said he, "whether at the very beginning, before many persons are come, and when your aspiring nature will not be gratified by a large audience, or quite at the close, when everybody is tired, and only a jaded and worn-out attention will be at your service."

"Que vous êtes dur, monsieur !" I said, affecting dejection.

"One ought to be 'dur' with you. You are one

of those beings who must be *kept down*. I know you! I know you! Other people in this house see you pass, and think that a colourless shadow has gone by. As for me, I scrutinized your face once, and it sufficed."

"You are satisfied that you understand me?"

Without answering directly he went on, "Were you not gratified when you succeeded in that vaudeville? I watched you, and saw a passionate ardour for triumph in your physiognomy. What fire shot into the glance! Not mere light, but flame: je me tins pour averti."

"What feeling I had on that occasion, monsieur —and pardon me if I say you immensely exaggerate both its quality and quantity—was quite abstract. I did not care for the vaudeville. I hated the part you assigned me. I had not the slightest sympathy with the audience below the stage. They are good people, doubtless, but do I know them? Are they anything to me? Can I care for being brought before their view again to-morrow? Will the examination be anything but a task to me—a task I wish well over?"

"Shall I take it out of your hands?"

"With all my heart; if you do not fear failure."

"But I should fail. I only know three phrases of English, and a few words: par exemple, de sonn, de mone, de stare—est-ce bien dit? My opinion is that it would be better to give up the thing altogether: to have no English examination, eh?"

"If Madame consents; I consent."

"Heartily?"

"Very heartily."

He smoked his cigar in silence. He turned suddenly.

"Donnez-moi la main," said he, and the spite and jealousy melted out of his face, and a generous kindliness shone there instead.

"Come, we will not be rivals, we will be friends," he pursued. "The examination shall take place, and I will choose a good moment; and instead of vexing and hindering, as I felt half-inclined ten minutes ago—for I have my malevolent moods: I always had from childhood—I will aid you sincerely. After all, you are solitary and a stranger, and have your way to make and your bread to earn; it may be well that you should become known. We will be friends: do you agree?"

"Out of my heart, monsieur. I am glad of a friend. I like that better than a triumph."

"Pauvrette!" said he, and turned away and left the alley.

The examination passed over well; M. Paul was as good as his word, and did his best to make my part easy. The next day came the distribution of prizes; that also passed; the school broke up; the pupils went home, and now began the long vacation.

That vacation! Shall I ever forget it? I think not. Madame Beck went, the first day of the

holidays, to join her children at the sea-side; all the three teachers had parents or friends with whom they took refuge; every professor quitted the city; some went to Paris, some to Boue-Marine; M. Paul set forth on a pilgrimage to Rome; the house was left quite empty, but for me, a servant, and a poor deformed and imbecile pupil, a sort of crétin, whom her stepmother in a distant province would not allow to return home.

My heart almost died within me; miserable longings strained its chords. How long were the September days! How silent, how lifeless! How vast and void seemed the desolate premises! How gloomy the forsaken garden—grey now with the dust of a town summer departed. Looking forward at the commencement of those eight weeks, I hardly knew how I was to live to the end. My spirits had long been gradually sinking; now that the prop of employment was withdrawn, they went down fast. Even to look forward was not to hope; the dumb future spoke no comfort, offered no promise, gave no inducement to bear present evil in reliance on future good. A sorrowful indifference to existence often pressed on me—a despairing resignation to reach betimes the end of all things earthly. Alas! When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert; tawny sands, with no green fields, no palm-tree, no well in view. The hopes which are dear to youth, which bear it up and lead

it on, I knew not and dared not know. If they knocked at my heart sometimes, an inhospitable bar to admission must be inwardly drawn. When they turned away thus rejected, tears sad enough sometimes flowed; but it could not be helped; I dared not give such guests lodging. So mortally did I fear the sin and weakness of presumption.

Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist; and you, stern sage: you, stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer: you, epicure, laugh. Well, each and all, take it your own way. I accept the sermon, frown, sneer, and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong. The first month was, indeed, a long, black, heavy month to me.

The crétin did not seem unhappy. I did my best to feed her well and keep her warm, and she only asked food and sunshine, or when that lacked, fire. Her weak faculties approved of inertion: her brain, her eyes, her ears, her heart slept content; they could not wake to work, so lethargy was their Paradise.

Three weeks of that vacation were hot, fair, and dry, but the fourth and fifth were tempestuous and wet. I do not know why that change in the atmosphere made a cruel impression on me, why the raging storm and beating rain crushed me with a deadlier paralysis than I had experienced while

the air had remained serene ; but so it was ; and my nervous system could hardly support what it had for many days and nights to undergo in that huge empty house. How I used to pray to Heaven for consolation and support ! With what dread force the conviction would grasp me that fate was my permanent foe, never to be conciliated. I did not, in my heart, arraign the mercy or justice of God for this ; I concluded it to be a part of His great plan that some must deeply suffer while they live, and I thrilled in the certainty that of this number I was one.

It was some relief when an aunt of the crétin, a kind old woman, came one day, and took away my strange, deformed companion. The hapless creature had been at times a heavy charge ; I could not take her out beyond the garden, and I could not leave her a minute alone : for her poor mind, like her body, was warped ; its propensity was to evil. A vague bent to mischief, an aimless malevolence, made constant vigilance indispensable. As she very rarely spoke, and would sit for hours together moping and mowing and distorting her features with indescribable grimaces, it was more like being prisoned with some strange tameless animal, than associating with a human being. Then there were personal attentions to be rendered which required the nerve of a hospital nurse ; my resolution was so tried, it sometimes fell dead-sick. These duties should not have fallen on me ; a servant, now

absent, had rendered them hitherto, and in the hurry of holiday departure, no substitute to fill this office had been provided. This tax and trial were by no means the least I have known in life. Still, menial and distasteful as they were, my mental pain was far more wasting and wearing. Attendance on the crétin deprived me often of the power and inclination to swallow a meal, and sent me faint to the fresh air, and the well or fountain in the court; but this duty never wrung my heart, or brimmed my eyes, or scalded my cheek with tears hot as molten metal.

The crétin being gone, I was free to walk out. At first I lacked courage to venture very far from the Rue Fossette, but by degrees I sought the city gates and passed them, and then went wandering away far along chaussées, through fields, beyond cemeteries, Catholic and Protestant, beyond farmsteads, to lanes and little woods, and I know not where. A goad thrust me on, a fever forbade me to rest; a want of companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine. I often walked all day, through the burning noon and the arid afternoon, and the dusk evening, and came back with moonrise.

While wandering in solitude, I would sometimes picture the present probable position of others, my acquaintance. There was Madame Beck at a cheerful watering-place with her children, her mother, and a whole troop of friends who had sought the

same scene of relaxation. Zélie St. Pierre was at Paris, with her relatives ; the other teachers were at their homes. There was Ginevra Fanshawe, whom certain of her connections had carried on a pleasant tour southward. Ginevra seemed to me the happiest. She was on the route of beautiful scenery ; these September suns shone for her on fertile plains, where harvest and vintage matured under their mellow beam. These gold and crystal moons rose on her vision over blue horizons waved in mounted lines.

But all this was nothing ; I too felt those autumn suns and saw those harvest moons, and I almost wished to be covered in with earth and turf, deep out of their influence ; for I could not live in their light, nor make them comrades, nor yield them affection. But Ginevra had a kind of spirit with her, empowered to give constant strength and comfort, to gladden daylight and embalm darkness ; the best of the good genii that guard humanity curtained her with his wings, and canopied her head with his bending form. By True Love was Ginevra followed ; never could she be alone. Was she insensible to this presence ? It seemed to me impossible : I could not realize such deadness. I imagined her grateful in secret, loving now with reserve ; but purposing one day to show how much she loved : I pictured her faithful hero half conscious of her coy fondness, and comforted by that consciousness : I conceived an electric chord of sympathy between them, a fine chain of

mutual understanding, sustaining union through a separation of a hundred leagues—carrying, across mound and hollow, communication by prayer and wish. Ginevra gradually became with me a sort of heroine. One day, perceiving this growing illusion, I said, "I really believe my nerves are getting overstretched: my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it—what shall I do? How shall I keep well?"

Indeed there was no way to keep well under the circumstances. At last a day and night of peculiarly agonizing depression were succeeded by physical illness; I took perforce to my bed. About this time the Indian summer closed and the equinoctial storms began; and for nine dark and wet days, of which the hours rushed on all turbulent, deaf, dishevelled—bewildered with sounding hurricane—I lay in a strange fever of the nerves and blood. Sleep went quite away. I used to rise in the night, look round for her, beseech her earnestly to return. A rattle of the window, a cry of the blast only replied —Sleep never came!

I err. She came once, but in anger. Impatient of my importunity she brought with her an avenging dream. By the clock of St. Jean Baptiste, that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes—a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity. Between twelve and

one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea. Suffering, brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, tastes not as this suffering tasted. Having drunk and woke, I thought all was over: the end come and past by. Trembling fearfully—as consciousness returned—ready to cry out on some fellow-creature to help me, only that I knew no fellow-creature was near enough to catch the wild summons—Goton in her far-distant attic could not hear—I rose on my knees in bed. Some fearful hours went over me: indescribably was I torn, racked and oppressed in mind. Amidst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved *me* well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live; and yet quite unendurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death challenged me to engage his unknown terrors. When I tried to pray I could only utter these words:—

"From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind."

Most true was it.

On bringing me my tea next morning Goton urged me to call in a doctor. I would not: I thought no doctor could cure me.

One evening—and I was not delirious: I was in my sane mind—I got up, I dressed myself, weak and shaking. The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer; the ghastly white beds were turning into spectres—the coronal of each became a death's-head, huge and sun-bleached—dead dreams of an elder world and mightier race lay frozen in their wide gaping eye-holes. That evening more firmly than ever fastened into my soul the conviction that Fate was of stone, and Hope a false idol—blind, bloodless, and of granite core. I felt, too, that the trial God had appointed me was gaining its climax, and must now be turned by my own hands, hot, feeble, trembling as they were. It rained still, and blew; but with more clemency, I thought, than it had poured and raged all day. Twilight was falling, and I deemed its influence pitiful: from the lattice I saw coming night clouds trailing low like banners drooping. It seemed to me that at this hour there was affection and sorrow in Heaven above for all pain suffered on earth beneath; the weight of my dreadful dream became alleviated—that insufferable thought of being no more loved—no more owned, half-yielded to hope of the contrary—I was sure this hope would shine clearer if I got out from under this house-roof, which was crushing as the slab of a tomb, and went outside the city to a certain quiet hill, a long way distant in the fields. Covered with a cloak (I could not be delirious, for I had sense and recollection to

put on warm clothing) forth I set. The bells of a church arrested me in passing; they seemed to call me in to the *salut*, and I went in. Any solemn rite, any spectacle of sincere worship, any opening for appeal to God was as welcome to me then as bread to one in extremity of want. I knelt down with others on the stone pavement. It was an old solemn church, its pervading gloom not gilded but purpled by light shed through stained glass.

Few worshippers were assembled, and the *salut* over, half of them departed. I discovered soon that those left remained to confess. I did not stir. Carefully every door of the church was shut; a holy quiet sank upon, and a solemn shade gathered about us. After a space, breathless and spent in prayer, a penitent approached the confessional. I watched. She whispered her avowal; her shrift was whispered back; she returned consoled. Another went, and another. A pale lady, kneeling near me, said in a low, kind voice :—

"Go you now, I am not quite prepared."

Mechanically obedient, I rose and went. I knew what I was about; my mind had run over the intent with lightning speed. To take this step could not make me more wretched than I was; it might soothe me.

The priest within the confessional never turned his eyes to regard me; he only quietly inclined his ear to my lips. He might be a good man, but this duty had become to him a sort of form: he went

through it with the phlegm of custom. I hesitated; of the formula of confession I was ignorant: instead of commencing then with the prelude usual, I said:—

"Mon père, je suis Protestante."

He directly turned. He was not a native priest: of that class, the caste of physiognomy is, almost invariably, grovelling: I saw by his profile and brow he was a Frenchman; though grey and advanced in years, he did not, I think, lack feeling or intelligence. He inquired, not unkindly, why, being a Protestant, I came to him?

I said I was perishing for a word of advice or an accent of comfort. I had been living for some weeks quite alone; I had been ill; I had a pressure of affliction on my mind of which it would hardly any longer endure the weight.

"Was it a sin, a crime?" he inquired, somewhat startled.

I reassured him on this point, and, as well as I could, I showed him the mere outline of my experience.

He looked thoughtful, surprised, puzzled. "You take me unawares," said he. "I have not had such a case as yours before: ordinarily, we know our routine, and are prepared; but this makes a great break in the common course of confession. I am hardly furnished with counsel fitting the circumstances."

Of course, I had not expected he would be; but

the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated—the mere pouring out of some portion of long-accumulating, long pent-up pain into a vessel whence it could not be again diffused—had done me good. I was already solaced.

"Must I go, father?" I asked of him as he sat silent.

"My daughter," he said kindly—and I am sure he was a kind man: he had a compassionate eye—"for the present you had better go: but I assure you your words have struck me. Confession, like other things, is apt to become formal and trivial with habit. You have come and poured your heart out; a thing seldom done. I would fain think your case over, and take it with me to my oratory. Were you of our faith I should know what to say—a mind so tossed can find repose but in the bosom of retreat, and the punctual practice of piety. The world, it is well known, has no satisfaction for that class of natures. Holy men have bidden penitents like you to hasten their path upward by penance, self-denial, and difficult good works. Tears are given them here for meat and drink—bread of affliction and waters of affliction—their recompense comes hereafter. It is my own conviction that these impressions under which you are smarting are messengers from God to bring you back to the true Church. You were made for our faith: depend upon it our faith alone could heal and help you—Protestantism

is altogether too dry, cold, prosaic for you. The further I look into this matter, the more plainly I see it is entirely out of the common order of things. On no account would I lose sight of you. Go, my daughter, for the present; but return to me again."

I rose and thanked him. I was withdrawing when he signed me to return.

"You must not come to this church," said he; "I see you are ill, and this church is too cold; you must come to my house: I live ——" (and he gave me his address). "Be there to-morrow morning at ten."

In reply to this appointment, I only bowed; and pulling down my veil, and gathering round me my cloak, I glided away.

Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace. That priest had arms which could influence me: he was naturally kind, with a sentimental French kindness, to whose softness I knew myself not wholly impervious. Without respecting some sorts of affection, there was hardly any sort having a fibre of root in reality, which I could rely on my force wholly to withstand. Had I gone to him, he would have shown me all that was tender, and comforting, and gentle, in the honest Popish superstition. Then he would have tried to kindle, blow and stir up in me the zeal of good

works. I know not how it would all have ended. We all think ourselves strong in some points; we all know ourselves weak in many; the probabilities are that had I visited Numero 10, Rue des Mages, at the hour and day appointed, I might just now, instead of writing this heretic narrative, be counting my beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent on the Boulevard of Crécy, in Villette. There was something of Fénélon about that benign old priest; and whatever most of his brethren may be, and whatever I may think of his Church and creed (and I like neither), of himself I must ever retain a grateful recollection. He was kind when I needed kindness; he did me good! May Heaven bless him!

Twilight had passed into night, and the lamps were lit in the streets ere I issued from that sombre church. To turn back was now become possible to me; the wild longing to breathe this October wind on the little hill far without the city walls had ceased to be an imperative impulse, and was softened into a wish with which Reason could cope: she put it down, and I turned, as I thought, to the Rue Fossette. But I had become involved in a part of the city with which I was not familiar; it was the old part, and full of narrow streets of picturesque, ancient, and mouldering houses. I was much too weak to be very collected, and I was still too careless of my own welfare and safety to be cautious; I grew embarrassed; I got immeshed in a network of turns

unknown. I was lost, and had no resolution to ask guidance of any passenger.

If the storm had lulled a little at sunset, it made up now for lost time. Strong and horizontal thundered the current of the wind from north-west to south-east. It brought rain like spray, and sometimes a sharp, hail-like shot; it was cold and pierced me to the vitals. I bent my head to meet it, but it beat me back. My heart did not fail at all in this conflict; I only wished that I had wings and could ascend the gale, spread and repose my pinions on its strength, career in its course, sweep where it swept. While wishing this, I suddenly felt colder where before I was cold, and more powerless where before I was weak. I tried to reach the porch of a great building near, but the mass of frontage and the giant spire turned black and vanished from my eyes. Instead of sinking on the steps as I intended, I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss. I remember no more.

CHAPTER XVI.

AULD LANG SYNE.

WHERE my soul went during that swoon I cannot tell. Whatever she saw, or wherever she travelled in her trance on that strange night, she kept her own secret; never whispering a word to Memory, and baffling imagination by an indissoluble silence. She may have gone upward, and come in sight of her eternal home, hoping for leave to rest now, and deeming that her painful union with matter was at last dissolved. While she so deemed, an angel may have warned her away from heaven's threshold, and, guiding her weeping down, have bound her, once more, all shuddering and unwilling, to that poor frame, cold and wasted, of whose companionship she was grown more than weary.

I know she re-entered her prison with pain, with reluctance, with a moan and a long shiver. The divorced mates, Spirit and Substance, were hard to re-unite: they greeted each other, not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle. The returning sense of sight came upon me, red, as if it swam in blood; suspended hearing rushed back

loud, like thunder; consciousness revived in fear: I sat up appalled, wondering into what region, amongst what strange beings I was waking. At first I knew nothing, I looked on: a wall was not a wall—a lamp not a lamp. I should have understood what we call a ghost, as well as I did the commonest object: which is another way of intimating that all my eye rested on struck it as spectral. But the faculties soon settled each in its place; the life-machine presently resumed its wonted and regular working.

Still, I knew not where I was; only in time I saw I had been removed from the spot where I fell: I lay on no portico-step; night and tempest were excluded by walls, windows, and ceiling. Into some house I had been carried—but what house?

I could only think of the pensionnat in the Rue Fossette. Still half-dreaming, I tried hard to discover in what room they had put me; whether the great dormitory, or one of the little dormitories. I was puzzled, because I could not make the glimpses of furniture I saw, accord with my knowledge of any of these apartments. The empty white beds were wanting, and the long line of large windows. "Surely," thought I, "it is not to Madame Beck's own chamber they have carried me!" And here my eye fell on an easy-chair covered with blue damask. Other seats, cushioned to match, dawned on me by degrees; and at last I took in the complete fact of a pleasant parlour, with

a wood fire on a clear-shining hearth, a carpet where arabesques of bright blue relieved a ground of shaded fawn ; pale walls over which a slight but endless garland of azure forget-me-nots ran mazed and bewildered amongst myriad gold leaves and tendrils. A gilded mirror filled up the space between two windows, curtained amply with blue damask. In this mirror I saw myself laid, not in bed, but on a sofa. I looked spectral ; my eyes larger and more hollow, my hair darker than was natural, by contrast with my thin and ashen face. It was obvious, not only from the furniture, but from the position of windows, doors, and fireplace, that this was an unknown room in an unknown house.

Hardly less plain was it that my brain was not yet settled ; for, as I gazed at the blue arm-chair, it appeared to grow familiar ; so did a certain scroll-couch, and not less so the round centre table, with a blue covering, bordered with autumn-tinted foliage ; and, above all, two little footstools with worked colours, and a small ebony-framed chair, of which the seat and back were also worked with groups of brilliant flowers on a dark ground.

Struck with these things, I explored further. Strange to say, old acquaintances were all about me, and "auld lang syne" smiled out of every nook. There were two oval miniatures over the mantel-piece, of which I knew by heart the pearls about the high and powdered "heads"; the velvets circling the

white throats; the swell of the full muslin kerchiefs; the pattern of the lace sleeve ruffles. Upon the mantel-shelf there were two china vases, some relics of a diminutive tea-service, as smooth as enamel and as thin as egg-shell, and a white centre ornament, a classic group in alabaster, preserved under glass. Of all these things I could have told the peculiarities, numbered the flaws or cracks, like any *clairvoyante.* Above all, there was a pair of handscreens, with elaborate pencil drawings finished like line engravings; these, my very eyes ached at beholding again, recalling hours when they had followed, stroke by stroke and touch by touch, a tedious, feeble, finical, school-girl pencil held in these fingers, now so skeleton-like.

Where was I? Not only in what spot of the world, but in what year of our Lord? For all these objects were of past days, and of a distant country. Ten years ago I bade them good-bye; since my fourteenth year they and I had never met. I gasped audibly, "Where am I?"

A shape hitherto unnoticed, stirred, rose, came forward: a shape inharmonious with the environment, serving only to complicate the riddle further. This was no more than a sort of native bonne, in a common-place bonne's cap and print dress. She spoke neither French nor English, and I could get no intelligence from her, not understanding her phrases of dialect. But she bathed my temples and forehead with some cool and perfumed water, and

then she heightened the cushion on which I reclined, made signs that I was not to speak, and resumed her post at the foot of the sofa.

She was busy knitting ; her eyes thus drawn from me, I could gaze on her without interruption. I did mightily wonder how she came there, or what she could have to do among the scenes or with the days of my girlhood. Still more I marvelled what those scenes and days could now have to do with me.

Too weak to scrutinize thoroughly the mystery, I tried to settle it by saying it was a mistake, a dream, a fever-fit ; and yet I knew there could be no mistake, and that I was not sleeping, and I believed I was sane. I wished the room had not been so well lighted, that I might not so clearly have seen the little pictures, the ornaments, the screens, the worked chair. All these objects, as well as the blue-damask furniture, were, in fact, precisely the same, in every minutest detail, with those I so well remembered, and with which I had been so thoroughly intimate, in the drawing-room of my godmother's house at Bretton. Methought the apartment only was changed, being of different proportions and dimensions.

I thought of Bedreddin Hassan, transported in his sleep from Cairo to the gates of Damascus. Had a Genius stooped his dark wing down the storm to whose stress I had succumbed, and gathering me from the church steps, and "rising high

into the air," as the Eastern tale said, had he borne me over land and ocean, and laid me quietly down beside a hearth of Old England? But no; I knew the fire of that hearth burned before its Lares no more—it went out long ago, and the household gods had been carried elsewhere.

The bonne turned again to survey me, and seeing my eyes wide open, and, I suppose, deeming their expression perturbed and excited, she put down her knitting. I saw her busied for a moment at a little stand; she poured out water, and measured drops from a phial: glass in hand, she approached me. What dark-tinged draught might she now be offering? what Genii-elixir or Magi-distillation?

I was too late to inquire—I had swallowed it passively and at once. A tide of quiet thought now came gently caressing my brain; softer and softer rose the flow, with tepid undulations smoother than balm. The pain of weakness left my limbs, my muscles slept. I lost power to move; but, losing at the same time wish, it was no privation. That kind bonne placed a screen between me and the lamp; I saw her rise to do this, but do not remember seeing her resume her place: in the interval between the two acts, I "fell on sleep."

* * * * * *

At waking, lo! all was again changed. The light of high day surrounded me; not, indeed, a warm, summer light, but the leaden gloom of raw and blustering autumn. I felt sure now that I was in

the pensionnat—sure by the beating rain on the casement; sure by the "wuther" of wind amongst trees, denoting a garden outside; sure by the chill, the whiteness, the solitude, amidst which I lay. I say *whiteness*—for the dimity curtains, dropped before a French bed, bounded my view.

I lifted them; I looked out. My eye, prepared to take in the range of a long, large, and white-washed chamber, blinked baffled, on encountering the limited area of a small cabinet—a cabinet with sea-green walls; also, instead of five wide and naked windows, there was one high lattice, shaded with muslin festoons: instead of two dozen little stands of painted wood, each holding a basin and an ewer, there was a toilette-table dressed, like a lady for a ball, in a white robe over a pink skirt; a polished and large glass crowned, and a pretty pin-cushion frilled with lace adorned it. This toilette, together with a small, low, green-and-white chintz arm-chair, a washstand topped with a marble slab, and supplied with utensils of pale-green ware, sufficiently furnished the tiny chamber.

Reader, I felt alarmed! Why? you will ask. What was there in this simple and somewhat pretty sleeping-closet to startle the most timid? Merely this—These articles of furniture could not be real, solid arm-chairs, looking-glasses, and washstands—they must be the ghosts of such articles; or, if this were denied as too wild a hypothesis—and, confounded as I was, I *did* deny it—there remained

but to conclude that I had myself passed into an abnormal state of mind; in short, that I was very ill and delirious: and even then, mine was the strangest figment with which delirium had ever harassed a victim.

I knew—I was obliged to know—the green chintz of that little chair; the little snug chair itself, the carved, shining-black, foliated frame of that glass; the smooth, milky-green of the china vessels on the stand; the very stand too, with its top of grey marble, splintered at one corner;—all these I was compelled to recognize and to hail, as last night I had, perforce, recognized and hailed the rosewood, the drapery, the porcelain, of the drawing-room.

Bretton! Bretton! and ten years ago shone reflected in that mirror. And why did Bretton and my fourteenth year haunt me thus? Why, if they came at all, did they not return complete? Why hovered before my distempered vision the mere furniture, while the rooms and the locality were gone? As to that pincushion made of crimson satin, ornamented with gold beads and frilled with thread-lace, I had the same right to know it as to know the screens—I had made it myself. Rising with a start from the bed, I took the cushion in my hand and examined it. There was the cipher "L.L.B." formed in gold beads, and surrounded with an oval wreath embroidered in white silk. These were the initials of my godmother's name—Louisa Lucy Bretton.

Am I in England? Am I at Bretton? I muttered; and hastily pulling up the blind with which the latter was shrouded, I looked out to try and discover *where* I was; half-prepared to meet the calm, old, handsome buildings and clean grey pavement of St. Ann's Street, and to see at the end the towers of the minster: or, if otherwise, fully expectant of a town view somewhere, a rue in Villette, if not a street in a pleasant and ancient English city.

I looked, on the contrary, through a frame of leafage, clustering round the high lattice, and forth thence to a grassy mead-like level, a lawn-terrace with trees rising from the lower ground beyond—high forest-trees, such as I had not seen for many a day. They were now groaning under the gale of October, and between their trunks I traced the line of an avenue, where yellow leaves lay in heaps and drifts, or were whirled singly before the sweeping west wind. Whatever landscape might lie further must have been flat, and these tall beeches shut it out. The place seemed secluded, and was to me quite strange: I did not know it at all.

Once more I lay down. My bed stood in a little alcove; on turning my face to the wall, the room with its bewildering accompaniments became excluded. Excluded? No! For as I arranged my position in this hope, behold, on the green space between the divided and looped-up curtains, hung

a broad, gilded picture-frame enclosing a portrait. It was drawn—well drawn, though but a sketch—in water-colours; a head, a boy's head, fresh, life-like, speaking, and animated. It seemed a youth of sixteen, fair-complexioned, with sanguine health in his cheek; hair long, not dark, and with a sunny sheen; penetrating eyes, an arch mouth, and a gay smile. On the whole a most pleasant face to look at, especially for those claiming a right to that youth's affections—parents, for instance, or sisters. Any romantic little school-girl might almost have loved it in its frame. Those eyes looked as if when somewhat older they would flash a lightning-response to love: I cannot tell whether they kept in store the steady-beaming shine of faith. For whatever sentiment met him in form too facile, his lips menaced, beautifully but surely, caprice and light esteem.

Striving to take each new discovery as quietly as I could, I whispered to myself,—

"Ah! that portrait used to hang in the breakfast-room, over the mantel-piece: somewhat too high, as I thought. I well remember how I used to mount a music-stool for the purpose of unhooking it, holding it in my hand, and searching into those bonny wells of eyes, whose glance under their hazel lashes seemed like a pencilled laugh; and well I liked to note the colouring of the cheek, and the expression of the mouth." I hardly believed fancy could improve on the curve of that mouth, or of the

chin; even *my* ignorance knew that both were beautiful, and pondered perplexed over this doubt: "How it was that what charmed so much, could at the same time so keenly pain?" Once, by way of test, I took little Missy Home, and, lifting her in my arms, told her to look at the picture.

"Do you like it, Polly?" I asked. She never answered, but gazed long, and at last a darkness went trembling through her sensitive eye, as she said, "Put me down." So I put her down, saying to myself: "The child feels it too."

All these things do I now think over, adding, "He had his faults, yet scarce ever was a finer nature; liberal, suave, impressible." My reflections closed in an audibly pronounced word, "Graham!"

"Graham!" echoed a sudden voice at the bedside. "Do you want Graham?"

I looked. The plot was but thickening; the wonder but culminating. If it was strange to see that well-remembered pictured form on the wall, still stranger was it to turn and behold the equally well-remembered living form opposite—a woman, a lady, most real and substantial, tall, well-attired, wearing widow's silk, and such a cap as best became her matron and motherly braids of hair. Hers, too, was a good face; too marked, perhaps, now for beauty, but not for sense of character. She was little changed; something sterner, something more robust—but she was my godmother: still the distinct vision of Mrs. Bretton.

I kept quiet, yet internally *I* was much agitated: my pulse fluttered, and the blood left my cheek, which turned cold.

"Madam, where am I?" I inquired.

"In a very safe asylum; well protected for the present; make your mind quite easy till you get a little better: you look ill this morning."

"I am so entirely bewildered, I do not know whether I can trust my senses at all, or whether they are misleading me in every particular: but you speak English, do you not, madam?"

"I should think you might hear that: it would puzzle me to hold a long discourse in French."

"You do not come from England!"

"I am lately arrived thence. Have you been long in this country? You seem to know my son?"

"Do I, madam? Perhaps I do. Your son—the picture there?"

"That is his portrait as a youth. While looking at it, you pronounced his name."

"Graham Bretton?"

She nodded.

"I speak to Mrs. Bretton, formerly of Bretton, ——shire?"

"Quite right; and you, I am told, are an English teacher in a foreign school here: my son recognized you as such."

"How was I found, madam, and by whom?"

"My son shall tell you that by-and-by," said she;

"but at present you are too confused and weak for conversation: try to eat some breakfast, and then sleep."

Notwithstanding all I had undergone—the bodily fatigue, the perturbation of spirits, the exposure to weather—it seemed that I was better: the fever, the real malady which had oppressed my frame, was abating; for, whereas during the last nine days I had taken no solid food, and suffered from continual thirst, this morning, on breakfast being offered, I experienced a craving for nourishment: an inward faintness which caused me eagerly to taste the tea this lady offered, and to eat the morsel of dry toast she allowed in accompaniment. It was only a morsel, but it sufficed; keeping up my strength till some two or three hours afterwards, when the bonne brought me a little cup of broth and a biscuit.

As evening began to darken, and the ceaseless blast still blew wild and cold, and the rain streamed on, deluge-like, I grew weary—very weary of my bed. The room, though pretty, was small: I felt it confining; I longed for a change. The increasing chill and gathering gloom, too, depressed me; I wanted to see—to feel firelight. Besides, I kept thinking of the son of that tall matron . when should I see him? Certainly not till I left my room.

At last the bonne came to make my bed for the night. She prepared to wrap me in a blanket and place me in the little chintz chair; but, declining these attentions, I proceeded to dress myself. The

business was just achieved, and I was sitting down to take breath, when Mrs. Bretton once more appeared.

"Dressed!" she exclaimed, smiling with that smile I so well knew—a pleasant smile, though not soft. "You are quite better then? Quite strong—eh?"

She spoke to me so much as of old she used to speak that I almost fancied she was beginning to know me. There was the same sort of patronage in her voice and manner that, as a girl, I had always experienced from her—a patronage I yielded to and even liked; it was not founded on conventional grounds of superior wealth or station (in the last particular there had never been any inequality; her degree was mine); but on natural reasons of physical advantage: it was the shelter the tree gives the herb. I put a request without further ceremony.

"Do let me go downstairs, madam; I am so cold and dull here."

"I desire nothing better, if you are strong enough to bear the change," was her reply. "Come then; here is an arm." And she offered me hers: I took it, and we descended one flight of carpeted steps to a landing where a tall door, standing open, gave admission into the blue-damask room. How pleasant it was in its air of perfect domestic comfort! How warm in its amber lamp-light and vermilion fire-flush! To render the picture perfect,

tea stood ready on the table—an English tea, whereof the whole shining service glanced at me familiarly; from the solid silver urn, of antique pattern, and the massive pot of the same metal, to the thin porcelain cups, dark with purple and gilding. I knew the very seed-cake of peculiar form, baked in a peculiar mould, which always had a place on the tea-table at Bretton. Graham liked it, and there it was as of yore—set before Graham's plate with the silver knife and fork beside it. Graham was then expected to tea: Graham was now, perhaps, in the house; ere many minutes I might see him.

"Sit down—sit down," said my conductress, as my step faltered a little in passing to the hearth. She seated me on the sofa, but I soon passed behind it, saying the fire was too hot; in its shade I found another seat which suited me better. Mrs. Bretton was never wont to make a fuss about any person or anything; without remonstrance she suffered me to have my own way. She made the tea, and she took up the newspaper. I liked to watch every action of my godmother; all her movements were so young: she must have been now about fifty, yet neither her sinews nor her spirit seemed yet touched by the rust of age. Though portly, she was alert, and though serene, she was at times impetuous—good health and an excellent temperament kept her green as in her spring.

While she read, I perceived she listened—listened

for her son. She was not the woman ever to confess herself uneasy, but there was yet no lull in the weather, and if Graham were out in that hoarse wind—roaring still unsatisfied—I well knew his mother's heart would be out with him.

"Ten minutes behind his time," said she, looking at her watch; then, in another minute, a lifting of her eyes from the page, and a slight inclination of her head towards the door, denoted that she heard some sound. Presently her brow cleared; and then even my ear, less practised, caught the iron clash of a gate swung to, steps on the gravel, lastly the door-bell. He was come. His mother filled the tea-pot from the urn, she drew nearer the hearth the stuffed and cushioned blue chair—her own chair by right, but I saw there was one who might with impunity usurp it. And when that *one* came up the stairs—which he soon did, after, I suppose, some such attention to the toilet as the wild and wet night rendered necessary, and strode straight in,—

"Is it you, Graham?" said his mother, hiding a glad smile and speaking curtly.

"Who else should it be, mamma?" demanded the Unpunctual, possessing himself irreverently of the abdicated throne.

"Don't you deserve cold tea, for being late?"

"I shall not get my deserts, for the urn sings cheerily."

"Wheel yourself to the table, lazy boy: no seat will serve you but mine; if you had one spark of a

sense of propriety, you would always leave that chair for the Old Lady."

"So I should; only the dear Old Lady persists in leaving it for me. How is your patient, mamma?"

"Will she come forward and speak for herself?" said Mrs. Bretton, turning to my corner; and at this invitation, forward I came. Graham courteously rose up to greet me. He stood tall on the hearth, a figure justifying his mother's unconcealed pride.

"So you are come down," said he; "you must be better then—much better. I scarcely expected we should meet thus, or here. I was alarmed last night, and if I had not been forced to hurry away to a dying patient, I certainly would not have left you; but my mother herself is something of a doctress, and Martha an excellent nurse. I saw the case was a fainting-fit, not necessarily dangerous. What brought it on, I have yet to learn, and all particulars; meantime, I trust you really do feel better."

"Much better," I said calmly. "Much better, I thank you, Dr. John."

For, reader, this tall young man—this darling son—this host of mine—this Graham Bretton, *was* Dr. John: he, and no other; and, what is more, I ascertained this identity scarcely with surprise. What is more, when I heard Graham's step on the stairs, I knew what manner of figure would enter, and for whose aspect to prepare my eyes. The discovery was not of to-day, its dawn had penetrated my perceptions long since. Of course I remembered

young Bretton well; and though ten years (from sixteen to twenty-six) may greatly change the boy as they mature him to the man, yet they could bring no such utter difference as would suffice wholly to blind my eyes, or baffle my memory. Dr. John Graham Bretton retained still an affinity to the youth of sixteen: he had his eyes; he had some of his features; to wit, all the excellently-moulded lower half of the face; I found him out soon. I first recognized him on that occasion, noted several chapters back, when my unguardedly-fixed attention had drawn on me the mortification of an implied rebuke. Subsequent observation confirmed, in every point, that early surmise. I traced in the gesture, the port, and the habits of his manhood, all his boy's promise. I heard in his now deep tones the accent of former days. Certain turns of phrase, peculiar to him of old, were peculiar to him still; and so was many a trick of eye and lip, many a smile, many a sudden ray levelled from the iris, under his well-charactered brow.

To *say* anything on the subject, to *hint* at my discovery, had not suited my habits of thought, or assimilated with my system of feeling. On the contrary, I had preferred to keep the matter to myself. I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, while he stood before me under a ray of special illumination, which shone all partial over his head, trembled about his feet, and cast light no farther.

Well I knew that to him it could make little difference, were I to come forward and announce, "This is Lucy Snowe!" So I kept back in my teacher's place; and as he never asked my name, so I never gave it. He heard me called "Miss," and "Miss Lucy"; he never heard the surname, "Snowe." As to spontaneous recognition—though I, perhaps, was still less changed than he—the idea never approached his mind, and why should I suggest it?

During tea, Dr. John was kind, as it was his nature to be; that meal over, and the tray carried out, he made a cosy arrangement of the cushions in a corner of the sofa, and obliged me to settle amongst them. He and his mother also drew to the fire, and ere we had sat ten minutes, I caught the eye of the latter fastened steadily upon me. Women are certainly quicker in some things than men.

"Well," she exclaimed, presently; "I have seldom seen a stronger likeness! Graham, have you observed it?"

"Observed what? What ails the Old Lady now? How you stare, mamma! One would think you had an attack of second sight."

"Tell me, Graham, of whom does that young lady remind you?" pointing to me.

"Mamma, you put her out of countenance. I often tell you abruptness is your fault; remember, too, that to you she is a stranger, and does not know your ways."

"Now, when she looks down; now, when she turns sideways, who is she like, Graham?"

"Indeed, mamma, since you propound the riddle, I think you ought to solve it!"

"And you have known her some time, you say—ever since you first began to attend the school in the Rue Fossette:—yet you never mentioned to me that singular resemblance!"

"I could not mention a thing of which I never thought, and which I do not now acknowledge. What *can* you mean?"

"Stupid boy! look at her."

Graham did look: but this was not to be endured; I saw how it must end, so I thought it best to anticipate.

"Dr. John," I said, "has had so much to do and think of, since he and I shook hands at our last parting in St. Ann's Street, that, while I readily found out Mr. Graham Bretton, some months ago, it never occurred to me as possible that he should recognize Lucy Snowe."

"Lucy Snowe! I thought so! I knew it!" cried Mrs. Bretton. And she at once stepped across the hearth and kissed me. Some ladies would, perhaps, have made a great bustle upon such a discovery without being particularly glad of it; but it was not my godmother's habit to make a bustle, and she preferred all sentimental demonstrations in bas-relief. So she and I got over the surprise with few words and a single salute: yet I dare

say she was pleased, and I know I was. While we renewed old acquaintance, Graham, sitting silently opposite, disposed of his paroxysm of astonishment.

"Mamma calls me a stupid boy, and I think I am so," at length he said; "for, upon my honour, often as I have seen you, I never once suspected this fact: and yet I perceive it all now. Lucy Snowe! To be sure! I recollect her perfectly, and there she sits; not a doubt of it. But," he added, "you surely have not known me as an old acquaintance all this time, and never mentioned it."

"That I have," was my answer.

Dr. John commented not. I suppose he regarded my silence as eccentric, but he was indulgent in refraining from censure. I dare say, too, he would have deemed it impertinent to have interrogated me very closely, to have asked me why and wherefore of my reserve; and, though he might feel a little curious, the importance of the case was by no means such as to tempt curiosity to infringe on discretion.

For my part, I just ventured to inquire whether he remembered the circumstance of my once looking at him very fixedly; for the slight annoyance he had betrayed on that occasion still lingered sore on my mind.

"I think I do!" said he: "I think I was even cross with you."

"You considered me a little bold, perhaps?" I inquired.

"Not at all. Only, shy and retiring as your general manner was, I wondered what personal or facial enormity in me proved so magnetic to your usually averted eyes."

"You see how it was now?"

"Perfectly."

And here Mrs. Bretton broke in with many, many questions about past times; and for her satisfaction I had to recur to gone-by troubles, to explain causes of seeming estrangement, to touch on single-handed conflict with Life, with Death, with Grief, with Fate. Dr. John listened, saying little. He and she then told me of changes they had known; even with them all had not gone smoothly, and Fortune had retrenched her once abundant gifts. But so courageous a mother, with such a champion in her son, was well fitted to fight a good fight with the world, and to prevail ultimately. Dr. John himself was one of those on whose birth benign planets have certainly smiled. Adversity might set against him her most sullen front: he was the man to beat her down with smiles. Strong and cheerful, and firm and courteous; not rash, yet valiant; he was the aspirant to woo Destiny herself, and to win from her stone eyeballs a beam almost loving.

In the profession he had adopted, his success was now quite decided. Within the last three months he had taken this house (a small chateau, they told me, about half a league without the Porte De Crécy); this country site being chosen for the sake

of his mother's health, with which town air did not now agree. Hither he had invited Mrs. Bretton, and she, on leaving England, had brought with her such residue furniture of the former St. Ann's Street mansion as she had thought fit to keep unsold. Hence my bewilderment at the phantoms of chairs, and the wraiths of looking-glasses, tea-urns, and teacups.

As the clock struck eleven, Dr. John stopped his mother.

"Miss Snowe must retire now," he said; "she is beginning to look very pale. To-morrow I will venture to put some questions respecting the cause of her loss of health. She is much changed indeed, since last July, when I saw her enact with no little spirit the part of a very killing fine gentleman. As to last night's catastrophe, I am sure thereby hangs a tale, but we will inquire no further this evening. Good-night, Miss Lucy."

And so he kindly led me to the door, and holding a wax candle, lighted me up the one flight of stairs.

When I had said my prayers, and when I was undressed and laid down, I felt that I still had friends. Friends, not professing vehement attachment, not offering the tender solace of well-matched and congenial relationship; on whom, therefore, but moderate demand of affection was to be made, of whom but moderate expectation formed; but towards whom my heart softened instinctively, and

yearned with an importunate gratitude, which I entreated Reason betimes to check.

"Do not let me think of them too often, too much, too fondly," I implored: "let me be content with a temperate draught of this living stream: let me not run athirst, and apply passionately to its welcome waters: let me not imagine in them a sweeter taste than earth's fountains know. Oh! would to God I may be enabled to feel enough sustained by an occasional, amicable intercourse, rare, brief, unengrossing and tranquil: quite tranquil!"

Still repeating this word, I turned to my pillow, and, *still* repeating it, I steeped that pillow with tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

LA TERRASSE.

These struggles with the natural character, the strong native bent of the heart, may seem futile and fruitless, but in the end they do good. They tend, however slightly, to give the actions, the conduct, that turn which Reason approves, and which Feeling, perhaps, too often opposes: they certainly make a difference in the general tenor of a life, and enable it to be better regulated, more equable, quieter on the surface, and it is on the surface only the common gaze will fall. As to what lies below, leave that with God. Man, your equal, weak as you, and not fit to be your judge, may be shut out thence: take it to your Maker—show Him the secrets of the spirit He gave—ask Him how you are to bear the pains He has appointed—kneel in His presence, and pray with faith for light in darkness, for strength in piteous weakness, for patience in extreme need. Certainly, at some hour, though perhaps not *your* hour, the waiting waters will stir; in *some* shape, though perhaps not the shape you

dreamed, which your heart loved, and for which it bled, the healing herald will descend, the cripple and the blind, and the dumb, and the possessed, will be led to bathe. Herald, come quickly! Thousands lie round the pool, weeping and despairing, to see it, through slow years, stagnant. Long are the "times" of Heaven: the orbits of angel messengers seem wide to mortal vision; they may en-ring ages: the cycle of one departure and return may clasp unnumbered generations; and dust, kindling to brief suffering life, and, through pain, passing back to dust, may meanwhile perish out of memory again, and yet again. To how many maimed and mourning millions is the first and sole angel visitant, him Easterns call Azrael?

I tried to get up next morning, but while I was dressing, and at intervals drinking cold water from the *carafe* on my washstand, with design to brace up that trembling weakness which made dressing so difficult, in came Mrs. Bretton.

"Here is an absurdity!" was her morning accost. "Not so," she added, and dealing with me at once in her own brusque, energetic fashion—that fashion which I used formerly to enjoy seeing applied to her son, and by him vigorously resisted—in two minutes she consigned me captive to the French bed.

"There you lie till afternoon," said she. "My boy left orders before he went out that such should be the case, and I can assure you my son is master

and must be obeyed. Presently you shall have breakfast."

Presently she brought that meal—brought it with her own active hands—not leaving me to servants. She seated herself on the bed while I ate. Now it is not everybody, even amongst our respected friends and esteemed acquaintance, whom we like to have near us, whom we like to watch us, to wait on us, to approach us with the proximity of a nurse to a patient. It is not every friend whose eye is a light in a sick-room, whose presence is there a solace: but all this was Mrs. Bretton to me; all this she had ever been. Food or drink never pleased me so well as when it came through her hands. I do not remember the occasion when her entrance into a room had not made that room chèerier. Our natures own predilections and antipathies alike strange. There are people from whom we secretly shrink, whom we would personally avoid, though reason confesses that they are good people: there are others with faults of temper, &c., evident enough, beside whom we live content, as if the air about them did us good. My godmother's lively black eye and clear brunette cheek, her warm, prompt hand, her self-reliant mood, her decided bearing, were all beneficial to me as the atmosphere of some salubrious climate. Her son used to call her "the old lady"; it filled me with pleasant wonder to note how the alacrity and power of five-and-twenty still breathed from her and around her.

"I would bring my work here," she said, as she took from me the emptied teacup, "and sit with you the whole day, if that overbearing John Graham had not put his veto upon such a proceeding. 'Now, mamma,' he said, when he went out, 'take notice, you are not to knock up your goddaughter with gossip,' and he particularly desired me to keep close to my own quarters, and spare you my fine company. He says, Lucy, he thinks you have had a nervous fever, judging from your look—is that so?"

I replied that I did not quite know what my ailment had been, but that I had certainly suffered a good deal, especially in mind. Further, on this subject, I did not consider it advisable to dwell, for the details of what I had undergone belonged to a portion of my existence in which I never expected my godmother to take a share. Into what a new region would such a confidence have led that hale, serene nature! The difference between her and me might be figured by that between the stately ship cruising safe on smooth seas, with its full complement of crew, a captain gay and brave, and venturous and provident; and the life-boat, which most days of the year lies dry and solitary in an old, dark boat-house, only putting to sea when the billows run high in rough weather, when cloud encounters water, when danger and death divide between them the rule of the great deep. No, the *Louisa Bretton* never was out of harbour on such a night,

and in such a scene: her crew could not conceive it; so the half-drowned life-boatman keeps his own counsel, and spins no yarns.

She left me, and I lay in bed content: it was good of Graham to remember me before he went out.

My day was lonely, but the prospect of coming evening abridged and cheered it. Then, too, I felt weak, and rest seemed welcome; and after the morning hours were gone by,—those hours which always bring, even to the necessarily unoccupied, a sense of business to be done, of tasks waiting fulfilment, a vague impression of obligation to be employed—when this stirring time was past, and the silent descent of afternoon hushed housemaid steps on the stairs and in the chambers, I then passed into a dreamy mood, not unpleasant.

My calm little room seemed somehow like a cave in the sea. There was no colour about it, except that white and pale green, suggestive of foam and deep water; the blanched cornice was adorned with shell-shaped ornaments, and there were white mouldings like dolphins in the ceiling angles. Even that one touch of colour visible in the red satin pin-cushion bore affinity to coral; even that dark shining glass might have mirrored a mermaid. When I closed my eyes, I heard a gale, subsiding at last, bearing upon the house-front like a setting swell upon a rock-base. I heard it drawn and withdrawn far, far off, like a tide retiring from a

shore of the upper world—a world so high above that the rush of its largest waves, the dash of its fiercest breakers, could sound down in this submarine home only like murmurs and a lullaby.

Amidst these dreams came evening, and then Martha brought a light; with her aid I was quickly dressed, and stronger now than in the morning, I made my way down to the blue saloon unassisted.

Dr. John, it appears, had concluded his round of professional calls earlier than usual; his form was the first object that met my eyes as I entered the parlour; he stood in that window-recess opposite the door, reading the close type of a newspaper by such dull light as closing day yet gave. The fire shone clear, but the lamp stood on the table unlit, and tea was not yet brought up.

As to Mrs. Bretton my active godmother—who, I afterwards found, had been out in the open air all day—lay half-reclined in her deep-cushioned chair, actually lost in a nap. Her son, seeing me, came forward. I noticed that he trod carefully, not to wake the sleeper; he also spoke low: his mellow voice never had any sharpness in it; modulated as at present, it was calculated rather to soothe than startle slumber.

"This is a quiet little chateau," he observed, after inviting me to sit near the casement, "I don't know whether you may have noticed it in your walks: though, indeed, from the chaussée it is not visible; just a mile beyond the Porte de Crécy, you

turn down a lane which soon becomes an avenue, and that leads you on, through meadow and shade, to the very door of this house. It is not a modern place, but built somewhat in the old style of the Basse-Ville. It is rather a manoir than a chateau ; they call it 'La Terrasse,' because its front rises from a broad turfed walk, whence steps lead down a grassy slope to the avenue. See yonder ! The moon rises : she looks well through the tree-boles."

Where, indeed, does the moon not look well? What is the scene, confined or expansive, which her orb does not hallow? Rosy or fiery, she mounted now above a not distant bank; even while we watched her flushed ascent, she cleared to gold, and, in very brief space, floated up stainless into a now calm sky. Did moonlight soften or sadden Dr. Bretton? Did it touch him with romance? I think it did. Albeit of no sighing mood, he sighed in watching it: sighed to himself quietly. No need to ponder the cause or the course of that sigh ; I know it was wakened by beauty : I knew it pursued Ginevra. Knowing this, the idea pressed upon me that it was in some sort my duty to speak the name he meditated. Of course he was ready for the subject: I saw in his countenance a teeming plenitude of comment, question and interest; a pressure of language and sentiment, only checked I thought by sense of embarrassment how to begin. To spare him this embarrassment was my best, indeed, my sole use. I had but to utter the idol's

name and love's tender litany would flow out. I had just found a fitting phrase: "You know that Miss Fanshawe is gone on a tour with the Cholmondeleys," and was opening my lips to speak to it, when he scattered my plans by introducing another theme.

"The first thing this morning," said he, putting his sentiment in his pocket, turning from the moon, and sitting down, "I went to the Rue Fossette, and told the cuisinière that you were safe and in good hands. Do you know that I actually found that she had not yet discovered your absence from the house; she thought you safe in the great dormitory. With what care you must have been waited on!"

"Oh! all that is very conceivable," said I. "Goton could do nothing for me but bring me a little tisane and a crust of bread, and I had rejected both so often during the past week, that the good woman got tired of useless journeys from the dwelling-house kitchen to the school dormitory, and only came once a day at noon to make my bed. Believe, however, that she is a good-natured creature, and would have been delighted to cook me cotelettes de mouton, if I could have eaten them."

"What did Madame Beck mean by leaving you alone?"

"Madame Beck could not foresee that I should fall ill."

"Your nervous system bore a good share of the suffering?"

"I am not quite sure what my nervous system is, but I was dreadfully low-spirited."

"Which disables me from helping you by pill or potion. Medicine can give nobody good spirits. My art halts at the threshold of Hypochondria: she just looks in and sees a chamber of torture, but can neither say nor do much. Cheerful society would be of use; you should be as little alone as possible; you should take plenty of exercise."

Acquiescence and a pause followed these remarks. They sounded all right, I thought, and bore the safe sanction of custom, and the well-worn stamp of use.

"Miss Snowe," recommenced Dr. John—my health, nervous system included, being now, somewhat to my relief, discussed and done with—"is it permitted me to ask what your religion is? Are you a Catholic?"

I looked up in some surprise—"A Catholic? No! Why suggest such an idea?"

"The manner in which you were consigned to me last night made me doubt."

"I consigned to you? But, indeed, I forget. It yet remains for me to learn how I fell into your hands."

"Why, under circumstances that puzzled me. I had been in attendance all day yesterday on a case of singularly interesting and critical character;

the disease being rare, and its treatment doubtful: I saw a similar and still finer case in a hospital in Paris; but that will not interest you. At last a mitigation of the patient's most urgent symptoms (acute pain is one of its accompaniments) liberated me, and I set out homeward. My shortest way lay through the Basse-Ville, and as the night was excessively dark, wild, and wet, I took it. In riding past an old church belonging to a community of Béguines, I saw by a lamp burning over the porch or deep arch of the entrance, a priest lifting some object in his arms. The lamp was bright enough to reveal the priest's features clearly, and I recognized him; he was a man I have often met by the sick-beds of both rich and poor: and chiefly the latter. He is, I think, a good old man, far better than most of his class in this country; superior, indeed, in every way, better informed, as well as more devoted to duty. Our eyes met; he called on me to stop: what he supported was a woman, fainting or dying. I alighted.

"'This person is one of your countrywomen,' he said: 'save her if she is not dead.'

"My countrywoman, on examination, turned out to be the English teacher at Madame Beck's pensionnat. She was perfectly unconscious, perfectly bloodless, and nearly cold.

"'What does it all mean?' was my inquiry.

"He communicated a curious account; that you had been to him that evening at confessional; that

your exhausted and suffering appearance, coupled with some things you had said——"

"Things I had said? I wonder what things!"

"Awful crimes, no doubt; but he did not tell me what: there, you know, the seal of the confessional checked his garrulity, and my curiosity. Your confidences, however, had not made an enemy of the good father; it seems he was so struck, and felt so sorry that you should be out on such a night alone, that he had esteemed it a Christian duty to watch you when you quitted the church, and so to manage as not to lose sight of you, till you should have reached home. Perhaps the worthy man might, half unconsciously, have blent in this proceeding some little of the subtility of his class: it might have been his resolve to learn the locality of your home—did you impart that in your confession?"

"I did not: on the contrary, I carefully avoided the shadow of any indication: and as to my confession, Dr. John, I suppose you will think me mad for taking such a step, but I could not help it; I suppose it was all the fault of what you call my 'nervous system.' I cannot put the case into words, but my days and nights were grown intolerable: a cruel sense of desolation pained my mind: a feeling that would make its way, rush out, or kill me—like (and this you will understand, Dr. John) the current which passes through the heart, and which, if aneurism or any other morbid cause obstructs its natural channels, seeks

abnormal outlet. I wanted companionship, I wanted friendship, I wanted counsel. I could find none of these in closet or chamber, so I went and sought them in church and confessional. As to what I said, it was no confidence, no narrative. I have done nothing wrong; my life has not been active enough for any dark deed, either of romance or reality: all I poured out was a dreary, desperate complaint."

"Lucy, you ought to travel for about six months: why, your calm nature is growing quite excitable! Confound Madame Beck! Has the little buxom widow no bowels, to condemn her best teacher to solitary confinement?"

"It was not Madame Beck's fault," said I; "it is no living being's fault, and I won't hear any one blamed."

"Who is in the wrong, then, Lucy?"

"Me—Dr. John—me; and a great abstraction on whose wide shoulders I like to lay the mountains of blame they were sculptured to bear: me and Fate."

"'Me' must take better care in future," said Dr. John—smiling, I suppose, at my bad grammar.

"Change of air—change of scene; those are my prescriptions," pursued the practical young doctor. "But to return to our muttons, Lucy. As yet, Père Silas, with all his tact (they say he is a Jesuit), is no wiser than you choose him to be; for, instead of returning to the Rue Fossette, your

fevered wanderings—there must have been high fever——"

"No, Dr. John: the fever took its turn that night—now, don't make out that I was delirious, for I know differently."

"Good! you were as collected as myself at this moment, no doubt! Your wanderings had taken an opposite direction to the pensionnat. Near the Béguinage, amidst the stress of flood and gust, and in the perplexity of darkness, you had swooned and fallen. The priest came to your succour, and the physician, as we have seen, supervened. Between us we procured a fiacre and brought you here. Père Silas, old as he is, would carry you upstairs, and lay you on that couch himself. He would certainly have remained with you till suspended animation had been restored: and so should I, but, at that juncture, a hurried messenger arrived from the dying patient I had scarcely left—the last duties were called for—the physician's last visit and the priest's last rite: extreme unction could not be deferred. Père Silas and myself departed together, my mother was spending the evening abroad; we gave you in charge to Martha, leaving directions, which it seems she followed successfully. Now, are you a Catholic?"

"Not yet," said I, with a smile. "And never let Père Silas know where I live, or he will try to convert me; but give him my best and truest thanks when you see him, and if ever I get rich I

will send him money for his charities. See, Dr. John, your mother wakes: you ought to ring for tea."

Which he did; and as Mrs. Bretton sat up—astonished and indignant at herself for the indulgence to which she had succumbed, and fully prepared to deny that she had slept at all—her son came gaily to the attack,—

"Hushaby, mamma! Sleep again. You look the picture of innocence in your slumbers."

"My slumbers, John Graham! What are you talking about? You know I never *do* sleep by day: it was the slightest doze possible."

"Exactly! a seraph's gentle lapse—a fairy's dream. Mamma, under such circumstances, you always remind me of Titania."

"That is because you, yourself, are so like Bottom."

"Miss Snowe—did you ever hear anything like mamma's wit? She is a most sprightly woman for her size and age."

"Keep your compliments to yourself, sir, and do not neglect your own size: which seems to me a good deal on the increase. Lucy, has he not rather the air of an incipient John Bull? He used to be slender as an eel, and now I fancy in him a sort of heavy dragoon bent—a beef-eater tendency. Graham, take notice! If you grow fat I disown you."

"As if you could not sooner disown your

own personality! I am indispensable to the old lady's happiness, Lucy. She would pine away in green and yellow melancholy if she had not my six feet of iniquity to scold. It keeps her lively—it maintains the wholesome ferment of her spirits."

The two were now standing opposite to each other, one on each side the fireplace; their words were not very fond, but their mutual looks atoned for verbal deficiencies. At least the best treasure of Mrs. Bretton's life was certainly casketed in her son's bosom; her dearest pulse throbbed in his heart. As to him, of course another love shared his feelings with filial love; and, no doubt, as the new passion was the latest born, so he assigned it in his emotions Benjamin's portion. Ginevra! Ginevra! Did Mrs. Bretton yet know at whose feet her own young idol had laid his homage? Would she approve that choice? I could not tell; but I could well guess that if she knew Miss Fanshawe's conduct towards Graham: her alternations between coldness and coaxing, and repulse and allurement; if she could at all suspect the pain with which she had tried him; if she could have seen, as I had seen, his fine spirits subdued and harassed, his inferior preferred before him, his subordinate made the instrument of his humiliation—*then* Mrs. Bretton would have pronounced Ginevra imbecile, or perverted, or both. Well—I thought so too.

That second evening passed as sweetly as the first

—*more* sweetly indeed: we enjoyed a smoother interchange of thought; old troubles were not reverted to, acquaintance was better cemented; I felt happier, easier, more at home. That night—instead of crying myself asleep—I went down to dreamland by a pathway bordered with pleasant thoughts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE QUARREL.

During the first days of my stay at the Terrace, Graham never took a seat near me, or in his frequent pacing of the room approached the quarter where I sat, or looked preoccupied, or more grave than usual, but I thought of Miss Fanshawe and expected her name to leap from his lips. I kept my ear and mind in perpetual readiness for the tender theme; my patience was ordered to be permanently under arms, and my sympathy desired to keep its cornucopia replenished and ready for outpouring. At last, and after a little inward struggle which I saw and respected, he one day launched into the topic. It was introduced delicately; anonymously as it were.

"Your friend is spending her vacation in travelling, I hear?" "Friend, forsooth!" thought I to myself: but it would not do to contradict; he must have his own way; I must own the soft impeachment: friend let it be. Still, by way of experiment, I could not help asking whom he meant?

He had taken a seat at my work-table ; he now laid hands on a reel of thread which he proceeded recklessly to unwind.

"Ginevra—Miss Fanshawe, has accompanied the Cholmondeleys on a tour through the south of France?"

"She has."

"Do you and she correspond?"

"It will astonish you to hear that I never once thought of making application for that privilege."

"You have seen letters of her writing?"

"Yes ; several to her uncle."

"They will not be deficient in wit and *naïveté ;* there is so much sparkle, and so little art in her soul?"

"She writes comprehensively enough when she writes to M. de Bassompierre : he who runs may read." (In fact, Ginevra's epistles to her wealthy kinsman were commonly business documents, unequivocal applications for cash.)

"And her handwriting? It must be pretty, light, ladylike, I should think?"

It was, and I said so.

"I verily believe that all she does is well done," said Dr. John ; and as I seemed in no hurry to chime in with this remark, he added : "You, who know her, could you name a point in which she is deficient?"

"She does several things very well." ("Flirtation amongst the rest," subjoined I, in thought.)

"When do you suppose she will return to town?" he soon inquired.

"Pardon me, Dr. John, I must explain. You honour me too much in ascribing to me a degree of intimacy with Miss Fanshawe I have not the felicity to enjoy. I have never been the depositary of her plans and secrets. You will find her particular friends in another sphere than mine: amongst the Cholmondeleys for instance."

He actually thought I was stung with a kind of jealous pain similar to his own! "Excuse her," he said: "judge her indulgently; the glitter of fashion misleads her, but she will soon find out that these people are hollow, and will return to you with augmented attachment and confirmed trust. I know something of the Cholmondeleys: superficial, showy, selfish people; depend on it, at heart Ginevra values you beyond a score of such."

"You are very kind," I said briefly. A disclaimer of the sentiments attributed to me burned on my lips, but I extinguished the flame. I submitted to be looked upon as the humiliated, cast-off, and now pining confidante of the distinguished Miss Fanshawe: but, reader, it was a hard submission.

"Yet, you see," continued Graham, "while I comfort *you*, I cannot take the same consolation to myself; I cannot hope she will do me justice. De Hamal is most worthless, yet I fear he pleases her: wretched delusion!"

My patience really gave way, and without notice: all at once. I suppose illness and weakness had worn it and made it brittle.

"Dr. Bretton," I broke out, "there is no delusion like your own. On all points but one you are a man, frank, healthful, right-thinking, clear-sighted; on this exceptional point you are but a slave. I declare, where Miss Fanshawe is concerned, you merit no respect; nor have you mine."

I got up, and left the room very much excited.

This little scene took place in the morning; I had to meet him again in the evening, and then I saw I had done mischief. He was not made of common clay, not put together out of vulgar materials; while the outlines of his nature had been shaped with breadth and vigour, the details embraced workmanship of almost feminine delicacy: finer, much finer, than you could be prepared to meet with; than you could believe inherent in him, even after years of acquaintance. Indeed, till some over-sharp contact with his nerves had betrayed, by its effects, their acute sensibility, this elaborate construction must be ignored; and the more especially because the sympathetic faculty was not prominent in him: to feel, and to seize quickly another's feelings, are separate properties: a few constructions possess both, some neither. Dr. John had the one in exquisite perfection; and

because I have admitted that he was not endowed with the other in equal degree, the reader will considerately refrain from passing to an extreme, and pronouncing him *un*sympathizing, unfeeling : on the contrary, he was a kind, generous man. Make your need known, his hand was open. Put your grief into words, he turned no deaf ear. Expect refinements of perception, miracles of intuition, and realize disappointment. This night, when Dr. John entered the room, and met the evening lamp, I saw well and at one glance his whole mechanism.

To one who had named him "slave," and, on any point, banned him from respect, he must now have peculiar feelings. That the epithet was well applied, and the ban just, might be ; he put forth no denial that it was so : his mind even candidly revolved that unmanning possibility. He sought in this accusation the cause of that ill-success which had got so galling a hold on his mental peace. Amid the worry of a self-condemnatory soliloquy, his demeanour seemed grave, perhaps cold, both to me and his mother. And yet there was no bad feeling, no malice, no rancour, no littleness in his countenance, beautiful with a man's best beauty, even in its depression. When I placed his chair at the table, which I hastened to do, anticipating the servant, and when I handed him his tea, which I did with trembling care, he said,—

"Thank you, Lucy," in as kindly a tone of his full, pleasant voice, as ever my ear welcomed.

For my part, there was only one plan to be pursued; I must expiate my culpable vehemence, or I must not sleep that night. This would not do at all; I could not stand it: I made no pretence of capacity to wage war on this footing. School solitude, conventual silence and stagnation, anything seemed preferable to living embroiled with Dr. John. As to Ginevra, she might take the silver wings of a dove, or any other fowl that flies, and mount straight up to the highest place, among the highest stars, where her lover's highest flight of fancy chose to fix the constellation of her charms: never more be it mine to dispute the arrangement. Long I tried to catch his eye. Again and again that eye just met mine; but, having nothing to say, it withdrew, and I was baffled. After tea, he sat, sad and quiet, reading a book. I wished I could have dared to go and sit near him, but it seemed that if I ventured to take that step, he would infallibly evince hostility and indignation. I longed to speak out, and I dared not whisper. His mother left the room; then, moved by insupportable regret, I just murmured the words "Dr. Bretton."

He looked up from his book; his eyes were not cold or malevolent, his mouth was not cynical; he was ready and willing to hear what I might have to say: his spirit was of vintage too mellow and generous to sour in one thunderclap.

"Dr. Bretton, forgive my hasty words: *do, do* forgive them."

He smiled that moment I spoke. "Perhaps I deserved them, Lucy. If you don't respect me, I am sure it is because I am not respectable. I fear, I am an awkward fool: I must manage badly in some way, for where I wish to please, it seems I don't please."

"Of that you cannot be sure; and even if such be the case, is it the fault of your character, or of another's perceptions? But now, let me unsay what I said in anger. In one thing, and in all things, I deeply respect you. If you think scarcely enough of yourself, and too much of others, what is that but an excellence?"

"Can I think too much of Ginevra?"

"*I* believe you may; *you* believe you can't. Let us agree to differ. Let me be pardoned; that is what I ask."

"Do you think I cherish ill-will for one warm word?"

"I see you do not and cannot; but just say, 'Lucy, I forgive you!' Say that, to ease me of the heartache."

"Put away your heartache, as I will put away mine; for you wounded me a little, Lucy. Now, when the pain is gone, I more than forgive: I feel grateful, as to a sincere well-wisher."

"I *am* your sincere well-wisher: you are right."

Thus our quarrel ended.

Reader, if in the course of this work you find that my opinion of Dr. John undergoes modifica-

tion, excuse the seeming inconsistency. I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered.

He showed the fineness of his nature by being kinder to me after that misunderstanding than before. Nay, the very incident which, by my theory, must in some degree estrange me and him, changed, indeed, somewhat our relations; but not in the sense I painfully anticipated. An invisible, but a cold something, very slight, very transparent, but very chill: a sort of screen of ice had hitherto, all through our two lives, glazed the medium through which we exchanged intercourse. Those few warm words, though only warm with anger, breathed on that frail frost-work of reserve; about this time, it gave note of dissolution. I think from that day, so long as we continued friends, he never in discourse stood on topics of ceremony with me. He seemed to know that if he would but talk about himself, and about that in which he was most interested, my expectation would always be answered, my wish always satisfied. It follows, as a matter of course, that I continued to hear much of "Ginevra."

"Ginevra!" He thought her so fair, so good; he spoke so lovingly of her charms, her sweetness, her innocence, that, in spite of my plain prose knowledge of the reality, a kind of reflected glow began to settle on her idea, even for me. Still, reader, I am free to confess, that he often talked

nonsense; but I strove to be unfailingly patient with him. I had had my lesson: I had learned how severe for me was the pain of crossing, or grieving, or disappointing him. In a strange and new sense, I grew almost selfish, and quite powerless to deny myself the delight of indulging his mood, and being pliant to his will. He still seemed to me most absurd when he obstinately doubted, and desponded about his power to win in the end Miss Fanshawe's preference. The fancy became rooted in my own mind more stubbornly than ever, that she was only coquetting to goad him, and that, at heart, she coveted every one of his words and looks. Sometimes he harassed me, in spite of my resolution to bear and hear; in the midst of the indescribable gall-honey pleasure of thus bearing and hearing, he struck so on the flint of what firmness I owned, that it emitted fire once and again. I chanced to assert one day, with a view to stilling his impatience, that in my own mind, I felt positive Miss Fanshawe *must* intend eventually to accept him.

"Positive! It was easy to say so, but had I any grounds for such assurance?"

"The best grounds."

"Now, Lucy, *do* tell me what?"

"You know them as well as I; and, knowing them, Dr. John, it really amazes me that you should not repose the frankest confidence in her fidelity. To doubt, under the circumstances, is almost to insult."

"Now you are beginning to speak fast and to breathe short; but speak a little faster and breathe a little shorter, till you have given an explanation—a full explanation: I must have it."

"You shall, Dr. John. In some cases you are a lavish, generous man: you are a worshipper ever ready with the votive offering: should Père Silas ever convert *you*, you will give him abundance of alms for his poor, you will supply his altar with tapers, and the shrine of your favourite saint you will do your best to enrich; Ginevra, Dr. John—"

"Hush!" said he, "don't go on."

"Hush I will *not:* and go on I *will:* Ginevra has had her hands filled from your hands more times than I can count. You have sought for her the costliest flowers; you have busied your brain in devising gifts the most delicate · such, one would have thought, as only a woman could have imagined; and in addition, Miss Fanshawe owns a set of ornaments, to purchase which your generosity must have verged on extravagance."

The modesty Ginevra herself had never evinced in this matter, now flushed all over the face of her admirer.

"Nonsense!" he said, destructively snipping a skein of silk with my scissors. "I offered them to please myself: I felt she did me a favour in accepting them."

"She did more than a favour, Dr. John, she pledged her very honour that she would make you

some return ; and if she cannot pay you in affection, she ought to hand out a business-like equivalent, in the shape of some rouleaux of gold pieces."

"But you don't understand her : she is far too disinterested to care for my gifts, and too simple-minded to know their value."

I laughed out : I had heard her adjudge to every jewel its price ; and well I knew money-embarrassment, money-schemes, money's worth, and endeavours to realize supplies, had, young as she was, furnished the most frequent, and the favourite stimulus of her thoughts for years.

He pursued. "You should have seen her whenever I have laid on her lap some trifle ; so cool, so unmoved ; no eagerness to take, not even pleasure in contemplating. Just from amiable reluctance to grieve me, she would permit the bouquet to lie beside her, and perhaps consent to bear it away. Or, if I achieved the fastening of a bracelet on her ivory arm, however pretty the trinket might be (and I always carefully chose what seemed to *me* pretty, and what of course was not valueless), the glitter never dazzled her bright eyes : she would hardly cast one look on my gift."

"Then, of course, not valuing it, she would unloose, and return it to you ?"

"No, for such a repulse she was too good-natured. She would consent to seem to forget what I had done, and retain the offering with lady-like quiet and easy oblivion. Under such circum-

stances, how can a man build on acceptance of his presents as a favourable symptom? For my part, were I to offer her all I have, and she to take it, such is her incapacity to be swayed by sordid considerations, I should not venture to believe the transaction advanced me one step."

"Dr. John," I began, "Love is blind;" but just then a blue, subtle ray sped sideways from Dr. John's eye: it reminded me of old days, it reminded me of his picture: it half led me to think that part, at least, of his professed persuasion of Miss Fanshawe's *naïveté* was assumed: it led me dubiously to conjecture that perhaps, in spite of his passion for her beauty, his appreciation of her foibles might possibly be less mistaken, more clear-sighted, than from his general language was presumable. After all it might be only a chance look, or at best, the token of a merely momentary impression. Chance or intentional, real or imaginary, it closed the conversation.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CLEOPATRA.

My stay at La Terrasse was prolonged a fortnight beyond the close of the vacation. Mrs. Bretton's kind management procured me this respite. Her son having one day delivered the dictum that "Lucy was not yet strong enough to go back to that den of a pensionnat," she at once drove over to the Rue Fossette, had an interview with the directress, and procured the indulgence, on the plea of prolonged rest and change being necessary to perfect recovery. Hereupon, however, followed an attention I could very well have dispensed with, viz. a polite call from Madame Beck.

That lady—one fine day—actually came out in a fiacre as far as the chateau. I suppose she had resolved within herself to see what manner of place Dr. John inhabited. Apparently, the pleasant site and neat interior surpassed her expectations; she eulogized all she saw, pronounced the blue salon "une pièce magnifique," profusely congratulated me on the acquisition of friends, "tellement dignes,

aimables, et respectables," turned also a neat compliment in my favour, and, upon Dr. John coming in, ran up to him with the utmost buoyancy, opening at the same time such a fire of rapid language, all sparkling with felicitations and protestations about his "chateau,"—"madame sa mère, la digne châtelaine :" also his looks ; which, indeed, were very flourishing, and at the moment additionally embellished by the good-natured but amused smile with which he always listened to Madame's fluent and florid French. In short, Madame shone in her very best phase that day, and came in and went out like a living catherine-wheel of compliments, delight, and affability. Half-purposely, and half to ask some question about school business, I followed her to the carriage, and looked in after she was seated and the door closed. In that brief fraction of time what a change had been wrought! An instant ago, all sparkles and jests, she now sat sterner than a judge and graver than a sage. Strange little woman !

I went back and teased Dr. John about Madame's devotion to him. How he laughed! What fun shone in his eyes as he recalled some of her fine speeches, and repeated them, imitating her voluble delivery! He had an acute sense of humour, and was the finest company in the world—when he could forget Miss Fanshawe.

* * * * * *

To "sit in sunshine calm and sweet" is said to be

excellent for weak people; it gives them vital force. When little Georgette Beck was recovering from her illness, I used to take her in my arms and walk with her in the garden by the hour together, beneath a certain wall hung with grapes, which the Southern sun was ripening: that sun cherished her little pale frame quite as effectually as it mellowed and swelled the clustering fruit.

There are human tempers, bland, glowing, and genial, within whose influence it is as good for the poor in spirit to live, as it is for the feeble in frame to bask in the glow of noon. Of the number of these choice natures were certainly both Dr. Bretton's and his mother's. They liked to communicate happiness, as some liked to occasion misery; they did it instinctively; without fuss, and apparently with little consciousness; the means to give pleasure rose spontaneously in their minds. Every day while I stayed with them, some little plan was proposed which resulted in beneficial enjoyment. Fully occupied as was Dr. John's time, he still made it in his way to accompany us in each brief excursion. I can hardly tell how he managed his engagements; they were numerous, yet by dint of system, he classed them in an order which left him a daily period of liberty. I often saw him hard-worked, yet seldom over-driven, and never irritated, confused, or oppressed. What he did was accomplished with the ease and grace of all-sufficing strength; with the bountiful cheerfulness of high

and unbroken energies. Under his guidance I saw, in that one happy fortnight, more of Villette, its environs, and its inhabitants, than I had seen in the whole eight months of my previous residence. He took me to places of interest in the town, of whose names I had not before so much as heard; with willingness and spirit he communicated much noteworthy information. He never seemed to think it a trouble to talk to me, and, I am sure, it was never a task to me to listen. It was not his way to treat subjects coldly and vaguely; he rarely generalized, never prosed. He seemed to like nice details almost as much as I liked them myself: he seemed observant of character: and not superficially observant, either. These points gave the quality of interest to his discourse; and the fact of his speaking direct from his own resources, and not borrowing or stealing from books—here a dry fact, and there a trite phrase, and elsewhere a hackneyed opinion—ensured a freshness, as welcome as it was rare. Before my eyes, too, his disposition seemed to unfold another phase; to pass to a fresh day: to rise in new and nobler dawn.

His mother possessed a good development of benevolence, but he owned a better and larger. I found, on accompanying him to the Basse-Ville—the poor and crowded quarter of the city—that his errands there were as much those of the philanthropist as the physician. I understood presently that—cheerfully, habitually, and in single-minded

unconsciousness of any special merit distinguishing his deeds—he was achieving, amongst a very wretched population, a world of active good. The lower orders liked him well; his poor patients in the hospitals welcomed him with a sort of enthusiasm.

But stop—I must not, from the faithful narrator, degenerate into the partial eulogist. Well, full well, do I know that Dr. John was not perfect, any more than I am perfect. Human fallibility leavened him throughout: there was no hour, and scarcely a moment of the time I spent with him, that in act, or speech, or look, he did not betray something that was not of a god. A god could not have the cruel vanity of Dr. John, nor his sometime levity. No immortal could have resembled him in his occasional temporary oblivion of all but the present—in his passing passion for that present; shown not coarsely, by devoting it to material indulgence, but selfishly, by extracting from it whatever it could yield of nutriment to his masculine self-love: his delight was to feed that ravenous sentiment, without thought of the price of provender, or care for the cost of keeping it sleek and high-pampered.

The reader is requested to note a seeming contradiction in the two views which have been given of Graham Bretton—the public and private—the outdoor and the indoor view. In the first, the public, he is shown oblivious of self; as modest in the display of his energies, as earnest in their

exercise. In the second, the fireside picture, there is expressed consciousness of what he has and what he is; pleasure in homage, some recklessness in exciting, some vanity in receiving the same. Both portraits are correct.

It was hardly possible to oblige Dr. John quietly and in secret. When you thought that the fabrication of some trifle dedicated to his use had been achieved unnoticed, and that, like other men, he would use it when placed ready for his use, and never ask whence it came, he amazed you by a smilingly-uttered observation or two proving that his eye had been on the work from commencement to close: that he had noted the design, traced its progress, and marked its completion. It pleased me to be thus served, and he let his pleasure beam in his eye and play about his mouth.

This would have been all very well, if he had not added to such kindly and unobtrusive evidence a certain wilfulness in discharging what he called debts. When his mother worked for him, he paid her by showering about her his bright animal spirits, with even more affluence than his gay, taunting, teasing, loving wont. If Lucy Snowe were discovered to have put her hand to such work, he planned, in recompense, some pleasant recreation.

I often felt amazed at his perfect knowledge of Villette; a knowledge not merely confined to its open streets, but penetrating to all its galleries, salles, and cabinets: of every door which shut in an

object worth seeing, of every museum, of every hall, sacred to art or science, he seemed to possess the "Open! Sesame." I never had a head for science, but an ignorant, blind, fond instinct inclined me to art. I liked to visit the picture-galleries, and I dearly liked to be left there alone. In company, a wretched idiosyncrasy forbade me to see much or to feel anything. In unfamiliar company, where it was necessary to maintain a flow of talk on the subjects in presence, half an hour would knock me up, with a combined pressure of physical lassitude and entire mental incapacity. I never yet saw the well-reared child, much less the educated adult, who could not put me to shame, by the sustained intelligence of its demeanour under the ordeal of a conversable, sociable visitation of pictures, historical sights or buildings, or any lions of public interest. Dr. Bretton was a cicerone after my own heart; he would take me betimes, ere the galleries were filled, leave me there for two or three hours, and call for me when his own engagements were discharged. Meantime, I was happy; happy, not always in admiring, but in examining, questioning, and forming conclusions. In the commencement of these visits, there was some misunderstanding and consequent struggle between Will and Power. The former faculty exacted approbation of that which it was considered orthodox to admire; the latter groaned forth its utter inability to pay the tax; it was then self-sneered at, spurred at, goaded

on to refine its taste, and whet its zest. The more it was chidden, however, the more it wouldn't praise. Discovering gradually that a wonderful sense of fatigue resulted from these conscientious efforts, I began to reflect whether I might not dispense with that great labour, and concluded eventually that I might, and so sank supine into a luxury of calm before ninety-nine out of a hundred of the exhibited frames.

It seemed to me that an original and good picture was just as scarce as an original and good book ; nor did I, in the end, tremble to say to myself, standing before certain *chefs-d'œuvre* bearing great names, "These are not a whit like nature. Nature's daylight never had that colour : never was made so turbid, either by storm or cloud, as it is laid out there, under a sky of indigo : and that indigo is not ether ; and those dark weeds plastered upon it are not trees." Several very well executed and complacent-looking fat women struck me as by no means the goddesses they appeared to consider themselves. Many scores of marvellously-finished little Flemish pictures, and also of sketches, excellent for fashion-books displaying varied costumes in the handsomest materials, gave evidence of laudable industry whimsically applied. And yet there were fragments of truth here and there which satisfied the conscience, and gleams of light that cheered the vision. Nature's power here broke through in a mountain snow-storm ; and there her

glory in a sunny Southern day. An expression in this portrait proved clear insight into character; a face in that historical painting, by its vivid filial likeness, startlingly reminded you that genius gave it birth. These exceptions I loved: they grew dear as friends.

One day, at a quiet early hour, I found myself nearly alone in a certain gallery, wherein one particular picture of portentous size, set up in the best light, having a cordon of protection stretched before it, and a cushioned bench duly set in front for the accommodation of worshipping connoisseurs, who, having gazed themselves off their feet, might be fain to complete the business sitting: this picture, I say, seemed to consider itself the queen of the collection.

It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. She was indeed, extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat—to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids—must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say; broad daylight blazed round her; she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing, or at

least sitting bolt upright. She had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments ; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case : out of abundance of material—seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery—she managed to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans—perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets—were rolled here and there on the foreground ; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor. On referring to the catalogue, I found that this notable production bore name "Cleopatra."

Well, I was sitting wondering at it (as the bench was there, I thought I might as well take advantage of its accommodation), and thinking that while some of the details—as roses, gold cups, jewels, &c. —were very prettily painted, it was on the whole an enormous piece of claptrap ; the room, almost vacant when I entered, began to fill. Scarcely noticing this circumstance (as, indeed, it did not matter to me), I retained my seat ; rather to rest myself than with a view to studying this huge, dark-complexioned gipsy-queen ; of whom, indeed, I soon tired, and betook myself for refreshment to the contemplation of some exquisite little pictures of still life : wild-flowers, wild-fruit, mossy wood-

nests, casketing eggs that looked like pearls seen through clear green sea-water; all hung modestly beneath that coarse and preposterous canvas.

Suddenly a light tap visited my shoulder. Starting, turning, I met a face bent to encounter mine; a frowning, almost a shocked face it was.

"Que faites vous ici?" said a voice.

"Mais, monsieur, je m'amuse."

"Vous vous amusez! et à quoi, s'il vous plait? Mais d'abord, faites-moi le plaisir de vous lever; prenez mon bras, et allons de l'autre côté."

I did precisely as I was bid. M. Paul Emanuel (it was he), returned from Rome, and now a travelled man, was not likely to be less tolerant of insubordination now, than before this added distinction laurelled his temples.

"Permit me to conduct you to your party," said he, as we crossed the room.

"I have no party."

"You are not alone?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Did you come here unaccompanied?"

"No, monsieur. Dr. Bretton brought me here."

"Dr. Bretton and Madame his mother, of course?"

"No; only Dr. Bretton."

"And he told you to look at *that* picture?"

"By no means; I found it out for myself."

M. Paul's hair was shorn close as raven down, or I think it would have bristled on his head

Beginning now to perceive his drift, I had a certain pleasure in keeping cool, and working him up.

"Astounding insular audacity!" cried the Professor. "Singulières femmes que ces Anglaises!"

"What is the matter, monsieur?"

"Matter! How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at *that* picture?"

"It is a very ugly picture, but I cannot at all see why I should not look at it."

"Bon! bon! Speak no more of it. But you ought not to be here alone."

"If, however, I have no society—no *party*, as you say? And then, what does it signify whether I am alone, or accompanied? nobody meddles with me."

"Taisez-vous, et asseyez-vous là—là!" Setting down a chair with emphasis in a particularly dull corner, before a series of most specially dreary "cadres."

"Mais, monsieur."

"Mais, mademoiselle, asseyez-vous, et ne bougez pas—entendez-vous? jusqu'à ce qu'on vienne vous chercher, ou que je vous donne la permission."

"Quel triste coin!" cried I, "et quelles laids tableaux!"

And "laids," indeed, they were; being a set of four, denominated in the catalogue "La vie d'une femme." They were painted rather in a remark-

able style—flat, dead, pale, and formal. The first represented a "Jeune Fille," coming out of a church-door, a missal in her hand, her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up—the image of a most villainous little precocious she-hypocrite. The second, a "Mariée" with a long white veil, kneeling at prie-dieu in her chamber, holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger, and showing the whites of her eyes in a most exasperating manner. The third, a "Jeune Mère," hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. The fourth, a "Veuve," being a black woman, holding by the hand a black little girl, and the twain studiously surveying an elegant French monument, set up in a corner of some Père la Chaise. All these four "Anges" were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers.

It was impossible to keep one's attention long confined to these master-pieces, and so, by degrees, I veered round, and surveyed the gallery.

A perfect crowd of spectators was by this time gathered round the Lioness, from whose vicinage I had been banished; nearly half this crowd were ladies, but M. Paul afterwards told me, these were "des dames," and it was quite proper for them to contemplate what no "demoiselle" ought to glance

at. I assured him plainly I could not agree in this doctrine, and did not see the sense of it; whereupon, with his usual absolutism, he merely requested my silence, and also, in the same breath, denounced my mingled rashness and ignorance. A more despotic little man than M. Paul never filled a professor's chair. I noticed, by the way, that he looked at the picture himself quite at his ease, and for a very long while; he did not, however, neglect to glance from time to time my way, in order, I suppose, to make sure that I was obeying orders, and not breaking bounds. By-and-by, he again accosted me.

"Had I not been ill?" he wished to know: "he understood I had."

"Yes, but I was now quite well."

"Where had I spent the vacation?"

"Chiefly in the Rue Fossette; partly with Madame Bretton."

"He had heard that I was left alone in the Rue Fossette; was that so?"

"Not quite alone: Marie Broc" (the crétin) "was with me."

He shrugged his shoulders; varied and contradictory expressions played rapidly over his countenance. Marie Broc was well known to M. Paul; he never gave a lesson in the third division (containing the least advanced pupils), that she did not occasion in him a sharp conflict between antagonistic impressions. Her personal appearance, her repulsive

manners, her often unmanageable disposition, irritated his temper, and inspired him with strong antipathy; a feeling he was too apt to conceive when his taste was offended or his will thwarted. On the other hand, her misfortunes constituted a strong claim on his forbearance and compassion—such a claim as it was not in his nature to deny; hence resulted almost daily drawn battles between impatience and disgust on the one hand, pity and a sense of justice on the other; in which, to his credit be it said, it was very seldom that the former feelings prevailed: when they did, however, M. Paul showed a phase of character which had its terrors. His passions were strong, his aversions and attachments alike vivid: the force he exerted in holding both in check by no means mitigated an observer's sense of their vehemence. With such tendencies, it may well be supposed he often excited in ordinary minds fear and dislike; yet it was an error to fear him: nothing drove him so nearly frantic as the tremor of an apprehensive and distrustful spirit; nothing soothed him like confidence tempered with gentleness. To evince these sentiments, however, required a thorough comprehension of his nature; and his nature was of an order rarely comprehended.

"How did you get on with Marie Broc?" he asked, after some minutes' silence.

"Monsieur, I did my best; but it was terrible to be alone with her!"

"You have then, a weak heart! You lack courage; and, perhaps, charity. Yours are not the qualities which might constitute a Sister of Mercy."

[He was a religious little man, in his way: the self-denying and self-sacrificing part of the Catholic religion commanded the homage of his soul.]

"I don't know, indeed: I took as good care of her as I could; but when her aunt came to fetch her away, it was a great relief."

"Ah! you are an egotist. There are women who have nursed hospitals-full of similar unfortunates. You could not do that?"

"Could Monsieur do it himself?"

"Women who are worthy of the name ought infinitely to surpass our coarse, fallible, self-indulgent sex, in the power to perform such duties."

"I washed her, I kept her clean, I fed her, I tried to amuse her; but she made mouths at me instead of speaking."

"You think you did great things?"

"No; but as great as I *could* do."

"Then limited are your powers, for in tending one idiot you fell sick."

"Not with that, monsieur; I had a nervous fever: my mind was ill."

"Vraiment! Vous valez peu de chose. You are not cast in an heroic mould; your courage will not avail to sustain you in solitude; it merely gives you the temerity to gaze with sang-froid at pictures of Cleopatra."

It would have been easy to show anger at the teasing, hostile tone of the little man. I had never been angry with him yet, however, and had no present disposition to begin.

"Cleopatra!" I repeated, quietly. "Monsieur, too, has been looking at Cleopatra; what does he think of her?"

"Cela ne vaut rien," he responded. "Une femme superbe—une taille d'impératrice, des formes de Junon, mais une personne dont je ne voudrais ni pour femme, ni pour fille, ni pour sœur. Aussi vous ne jeterez plus un seul coup d'œil de son côté."

"But I have looked at her a great many times while Monsieur has been talking: I can see her quite well from this corner."

"Turn to the wall and study your four pictures of a woman's life."

"Excuse me, M. Paul; they are too hideous: but if you admire them, allow me to vacate my seat and leave you to their contemplation."

"Mademoiselle," he said, grimacing a half-smile, or what he intended for a smile, though it was but a grim and hurried manifestation, "you nurslings of Protestantism astonish me. You unguarded English-women walk calmly amidst red-hot plough-shares and escape burning. I believe, if some of you were thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's hottest furnace you would issue forth untraversed by the smell of fire."

"Will Monsieur have the goodness to move an inch to one side?"

"How! At what are you gazing now? You are not recognizing an acquaintance amongst that group of jeunes gens?"

"I think so——Yes, I see there a person I know."

In fact, I had caught a glimpse of a head too pretty to belong to any other than the redoubted Colonel de Hamal. What a very finished, highly-polished little pate it was! What a figure, so trim and natty! What womanish feet and hands! How daintily he held a glass to one of his optics! with what admiration he gazed upon the Cleopatra! and then, how engagingly he tittered and whispered a friend at his elbow! Oh, the man of sense! Oh, the refined gentleman of superior taste and tact! I observed him for about ten minutes, and perceived that he was exceedingly taken with this dusk and portly Venus of the Nile. So much was I interested in his bearing, so absorbed in divining his character by his looks and movements, I temporarily forgot M. Paul; in the interim a group came between that gentleman and me: or possibly his scruples might have received another and worse shock from my present abstraction, causing him to withdraw voluntarily; at any rate, when I again looked round, he was gone.

My eye, pursuant of the search, met not him, but another and dissimilar figure, well seen amidst the crowd, for the height as well as the port lent each its distinction. This way came Dr. John, in visage,

in shape, in hue, as unlike the dark, acerb, and caustic little professor, as the fruit of the Hesperides might be unlike the sloe in the wild thicket; as the high-couraged but tractable Arabian is unlike the rude and stubborn "sheltie." He was looking for me, but had not yet explored the corner where the school-master had just put me. I remained quiet; yet another minute I would watch.

He approached de Hamal; he paused near him; I thought he had a pleasure in looking over his head; Dr. Bretton, too, gazed on the Cleopatra. I doubt if it were to his taste: he did not simper like the little count; his mouth looked fastidious, his eye cool; without demonstration he stepped aside, leaving room for others to approach. I saw now that he was waiting, and, rising, I joined him.

We took one turn round the gallery; with Graham it was very pleasant to take such a turn. I always liked dearly to hear what he had to say about either pictures or books; because, without pretending to be a connoisseur, he always spoke his thought, and that was sure to be fresh: very often it was also just and pithy. It was pleasant also to tell him some things he did not know—he listened so kindly, so teachably; unformalized by scruples lest so to bend his bright handsome head, to gather a woman's rather obscure and stammering explanation, should imperil the dignity of his manhood. And when he communicated information in return, it was with a lucid intelligence that left all his

words clear graven on the memory: no explanation of his giving, no fact of his narrating, did I ever forget.

As we left the gallery, I asked him what he thought of the Cleopatra (after making him laugh by telling him how Professor Emanuel had sent me to the right-about, and taking him to see the sweet series of pictures recommended to my attention).

"Pooh!" said he, "my mother is a better-looking woman. I heard some French fops, yonder, designating her as 'le type de voluptueux'; if so, I can only say, 'le voluptueux' is little to my liking. Compare that mulatto with Ginevra!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONCERT.

One morning, Mrs. Bretton, coming promptly into my room, desired me to open my drawers and show her my dresses; which I did, without a word.

"That will do," said she, when she had turned them over. "You must have a new one."

She went out. She returned presently with a dressmaker. She had me measured. "I mean," said she, "to follow my own taste, and to have my own way in this little matter."

Two days after came home—a pink dress!

"That is not for me," I said hurriedly, feeling that I would almost as soon clothe myself in the costume of a Chinese lady of rank.

"We shall see whether it is for you or not," rejoined my godmother, adding with her resistless decision: "Mark my words. You will wear it this very evening."

I thought I should not; I thought no human force should avail to put me into it. A pink dress! I knew it not. It knew not me. I had not proved it.

My godmother went on to decree that I was to go with her and Graham to a concert that same night: which concert, she explained, was a grand affair to be held in the large salle, or hall, of the principal musical society. The most advanced of the pupils of the Conservatoire were to perform; it was to be followed by a lottery "au bénéfice des pauvres;" and to crown all, the King, Queen, and Prince of Labassecour were to be present. Graham, in sending tickets, had enjoined attention to costume as a compliment due to royalty: he also recommended punctual readiness by seven o'clock.

About six, I was ushered upstairs. Without any force at all, I found myself led and influenced by another's will, unconsulted, unpersuaded, quietly overruled. In short, the pink dress went on, softened by some drapery of black lace. I was pronounced to be en grand tenue, and requested to look in the glass. I did so with some fear and trembling; with more fear and trembling, I turned away. Seven o'clock struck; Dr. Bretton was come; my godmother and I went down. *She* was clad in brown velvet; as I walked in her shadow, how I envied her those folds of grave, dark majesty! Graham stood in the drawing-room doorway.

"I *do* hope he will not think I have been decking myself out to draw attention," was my uneasy aspiration.

"Here, Lucy, are some flowers," said he, giving me a bouquet. He took no further notice of my

dress than was conveyed in a kind smile and satisfied nod, which calmed at once my sense of shame and fear of ridicule. For the rest, the dress was made with extreme simplicity, guiltless of flounce or furbelow; it was but the light fabric and bright tint which scared me, and since Graham found in it nothing absurd, my own eye consented soon to become reconciled.

I suppose people who go every night to places of public amusement, can hardly enter into the fresh gala feeling with which an opera or concert is enjoyed by those for whom it is a rarity. I am not sure that I expected great pleasure from the concert, having but a very vague notion of its nature, but I liked the drive there well. The snug comfort of the close carriage on a cold though fine night, the pleasure of setting out with companions so cheerful and friendly, the sight of the stars glinting fitfully through the trees as we rolled along the avenue; then the freer burst of the night-sky when we issued forth to the open chaussée, the passage through the city gates, the lights there burning, the guards there posted, the pretence of inspection to which we there submitted, and which amused us so much—all these small matters had for me, in their novelty, a peculiarly exhilarating charm. How much of it lay in the atmosphere of friendship diffused about me, I know not: Dr. John and his mother were both in their finest mood, contending animatedly with each other the whole

way, and as frankly kind to me as if I had been of their kin.

Our way lay through some of the best streets of Villette, streets brightly lit, and far more lively now than at high noon. How brilliant seemed the shops! How glad, gay, and abundant flowed the tide of life along the broad pavement! While I looked, the thought of the Rue Fossette came across me—of the walled-in garden and schoolhouse, and of the dark, vast "classes," where, at this very hour, it was my wont to wander all solitary, gazing at the stars through the high, blindless windows, and listening to the distant voice of the reader in the refectory, monotonously exercised upon the "lecture pieuse." Thus must I soon again listen and wander; and this shadow of the future stole with timely sobriety across the radiant present.

By this time we had got into a current of carriages all tending in one direction, and soon the front of a great illuminated building blazed before us. Of what I should see within this building, I had, as before intimated, but an imperfect idea; for no place of public entertainment had it ever been my lot to enter yet.

We alighted under a portico where there was a great bustle and a great crowd, but I do not distinctly remember further details, until I found myself mounting a majestic staircase wide and easy of ascent, deeply and softly carpeted with crimson,

leading up to great doors closed solemnly, and whose panels were also crimson-clothed.

I hardly noticed by what magic these doors were made to roll back—Dr. John managed these points; roll back they did, however, and within was disclosed a hall—grand, wide, and high, whose sweeping circular walls, and domed hollow ceiling, seemed to me all dead gold (thus with nice art was it stained), relieved by cornicing, fluting, and garlandry, either bright, like gold burnished, or snow-white, like alabaster, or white and gold mingled in wreaths of gilded leaves and spotless lilies: wherever drapery hung, wherever carpets were spread, or cushions placed, the sole colour employed was deep crimson. Pendant from the dome, flamed a mass that dazzled me—a mass, I thought, of rock-crystal, sparkling with facets, streaming with drops, ablaze with stars, and gorgeously tinged with dews of gems dissolved, or fragments of rainbows shivered. It was only the chandelier, reader, but for me it seemed the work of Eastern genii: I almost looked to see if a huge, dark, cloudy hand—that of the Slave of the Lamp—were not hovering in the lustrous and perfumed atmosphere of the cupola, guarding its wondrous treasure.

We moved on—I was not at all conscious whither—but at some turn we suddenly encountered another party approaching from the opposite direction. I just now see that group, as it flashed upon me for one moment. A handsome middle-

aged lady in dark velvet; a gentleman who might be her son—the best face, the finest figure, I thought, I had ever seen; a third person in a pink dress and black lace mantle.

I noted them all—the third person as well as the other two—and for the fraction of a moment believed them all strangers, thus receiving an impartial impression of their appearance. But the impression was hardly felt and not fixed, before the consciousness that I faced a great mirror, filling a compartment between two pillars, dispelled it: the party was our own party. Thus for the first, and perhaps only time in my life, I enjoyed the "giftie" of seeing myself as others see me. No need to dwell on the result. It brought a jar of discord, a pang of regret; it was not flattering, yet, after all, I ought to be thankful; it might have been worse.

At last, we were seated in places commanding a good general view of that vast and dazzling, but warm and cheerful hall. Already it was filled, and filled with a splendid assemblage. I do not know that the women were very beautiful, but their dresses were so perfect; and foreigners, even such as are ungraceful in domestic privacy, seem to possess the art of appearing graceful in public: however blunt and boisterous those everyday and home movements connected with peignoir and papillotes, there is a slide, a bend, a carriage of the head and arms, a mien of the mouth and eyes, kept nicely in reserve for gala use—always brought out

with the grande toilette, and duly put on with the "parure."

Some fine forms there were here and there, models of a peculiar style of beauty; a style, I think, never seen in England: a solid, firm-set, sculptural style. These shapes have no angles: a caryatid in marble is almost as flexible; a Phidian goddess is not more perfect in a certain still and stately sort. They have such features as the Dutch painters give to their madonnas: low-country classic features, regular but round, straight but stolid; and for their depth of expressionless calm, of passionless peace, a polar snow-field could alone offer a type. Women of this order need no ornament, and they seldom wear any; the smooth hair, closely braided, supplies a sufficient contrast to the smoother cheek and brow; the dress cannot be too simple; the rounded arm and perfect neck require neither bracelet nor chain.

With one of these beauties I once had the honour and rapture to be perfectly acquainted: the inert force of the deep, settled love she bore herself, was wonderful; it could only be surpassed by her proud impotency to care for any other living thing. Of blood, her cool veins conducted no flow; placid lymph filled and almost obstructed her arteries.

Such a Juno as I have described sat full in our view—a sort of mark for all eyes, and quite conscious that so she was, but proof to the magnetic influence of gaze or glance: cold,

rounded, blonde, and beauteous as the white column, capitalled with gilding, which rose at her side.

Observing that Dr. John's attention was much drawn towards her, I entreated him in a low voice, "for the love of heaven to shield well his heart. You need not fall in love with *that* lady," I said, "because, I tell you beforehand, you might die at her feet, and she would not love you again."

"Very well," said he; "and how do you know that the spectacle of her grand insensibility might not with me be the strongest stimulus to homage? The sting of desperation is, I think, a wonderful irritant to my emotions; but" (shrugging his shoulders) "you know nothing about these things; I'll address myself to my mother. Mamma, I'm in a dangerous way."

"As if that interested me!" said Mrs. Bretton.

"Alas! the cruelty of my lot!" responded her son. "Never man had a more unsentimental mother than mine: she never seems to think that such a calamity can befall her as a daughter-in-law."

"If I don't, it is not for want of having that same calamity held over my head; you have threatened me with it for the last ten years. 'Mamma, I am going to be married soon!' was the cry before you were well out of jackets."

"But, mother, one of these days it will be realized. All of a sudden, when you think you are most secure, I shall go forth like Jacob or Esau,

or any other patriarch, and take me a wife: pernaps of these which are of the daughters of the land."

"At your peril, John Graham! that is all."

"This mother of mine means me to be an old bachelor. What a jealous old lady it is! But now just look at that splendid creature in the pale blue satin dress, and hair of paler brown, with 'reflets satinés' as those of her robe. Would you not feel proud, mamma, if I were to bring that goddess home some day, and introduce her to you as Mrs. Bretton, junior?"

"You will bring no goddess to La Terrasse: that little chateau will not contain two mistresses; especially if the second be of the height, bulk, and circumference of that mighty doll in wood and wax, and kid and satin."

"Mamma, she would fill your blue chair so admirably!"

"Fill my chair? I defy the foreign usurper; a rueful chair should it be for her: but hush, John Graham! Hold your tongue, and use your eyes."

During the above skirmish, the hall which, I had thought, seemed full at the entrance, continued to admit party after party, until the semicircle before the stage presented one dense mass of heads, sloping from floor to ceiling. The stage, too, or rather the wide temporary platform, larger than any stage, desert half an hour since, was now overflowing with life; round two grand pianos, placed about

the centre, a white flock of young girls, the pupils of the Conservatoire, had noiselessly poured. I had noticed their gathering, while Graham and his mother were engaged in discussing the belle in blue satin, and had watched with interest the process of arraying and marshalling them. Two gentlemen, in each of whom I recognized an acquaintance, officered this virgin troop. One, an artistic-looking man, bearded, and with long hair, was a noted pianiste, and also the first music teacher in Villette; he attended twice a week at Madame Beck's pensionnat, to give lessons to the few pupils whose parents were rich enough to allow their daughters the privilege of his instructions; his name was M. Josef Emanuel, and he was half-brother to M. Paul: which potent personage was now visible in the person of the second gentleman.

M. Paul amused me; I smiled to myself as I watched him, he seemed so thoroughly in his element—standing conspicuous in presence of a wide and grand assemblage, arranging, restraining, overawing about one hundred young ladies. He was, too, so perfectly in earnest—so energetic, so intent, and, above all, so absolute: and yet what business had he there? What had he to do with music or the Conservatoire—he who could hardly distinguish one note from another? I knew that it was his love of display and authority which had brought him there—a love not offensive, only because so naïve. It presently became obvious that

his brother, M. Josef, was as much under his control as were the girls themselves. Never was such a little hawk of a man as that M. Paul! Ere long, some noted singers and musicians dawned upon the platform: as these stars rose, the comet-like professor set. Insufferable to him were all notorieties and celebrities: where he could not outshine, he fled.

And now all was prepared: but one compartment of the hall waited to be filled—a compartment covered with crimson, like the grand staircase and doors, furnished with stuffed and cushioned benches, ranged on each side of two regal chairs, placed solemnly under a canopy.

A signal was given, the doors rolled back, the assembly stood up, the orchestra burst out, and, to the welcome of a choral burst, enter the King, the Queen, the Court of Labassecour.

Till then, I had never set eyes on living king or queen; it may consequently be conjectured how I strained my powers of vision to take in these specimens of European royalty. By whomsoever majesty is beheld for the first time, there will always be experienced a vague surprise bordering on disappointment, that the same does not appear seated, en permanence, on a throne, bonneted with a crown, and furnished, as to the hand, with a sceptre. Looking out for a king and queen, and seeing only a middle-aged soldier and a rather young lady, I felt half-cheated, half-pleased.

Well do I recall that King—a man of fifty, a little bowed, a little grey : there was no face in all that assembly which resembled his. I had never read, never been told anything of his nature or his habits ; and at first the strong hieroglyphics graven as with iron stylet on his brow, round his eyes, beside his mouth, puzzled and baffled instinct. Ere long, however, if I did not *know*, at least I *felt*, the meaning of those characters, written without hand. There sat a silent sufferer—a nervous, melancholy man. Those eyes had looked on the visits of a certain ghost—had long waited the comings and goings of that strangest spectre, Hypochondria. Perhaps he saw her now on that stage, over against him, amidst all that brilliant throng. Hypochondria has that wont, to rise in the midst of thousands—dark as Doom, pale as Malady, and well-nigh strong as Death. Her comrade and victim thinks to be happy one moment—"Not so," says she ; "I come." And she freezes the blood in his heart, and beclouds the light in his eye.

Some might say it was the foreign crown pressing the King's brows which bent them to that peculiar and painful fold ; some might quote the effects of early bereavement. Something there might be of both these ; but these as embittered by that darkest foe of humanity—constitutional melancholy. The Queen, his wife, knew this : it seemed to me, the reflection of her husband's grief lay, a subduing shadow, on her own benignant face. A mild,

thoughtful, graceful woman that princess seemed; not beautiful, not at all like the women of solid charms and marble feelings described a page or two since. Hers was a somewhat slender shape; her features, though distinguished enough, were too suggestive of reigning dynasties and royal lines to give unqualified pleasure. The expression clothing that profile was agreeable in the present instance; but you could not avoid connecting it with remembered effigies, where similar lines appeared, under phase ignoble; feeble, or sensual, or cunning, as the case might be. The Queen's eye, however, was her own; and pity, goodness, sweet sympathy, blessed it with divinest light. She moved no sovereign, but a lady—kind, loving, elegant. Her little son, the Prince of Labassecour, a young Duc de Dindonneau, accompanied her: he leaned on his mother's knee; and, ever and anon, in the course of that evening, I saw her observant of the monarch at her side, conscious of his beclouded abstraction, and desirous to rouse him from it by drawing his attention to their son. She often bent her head to listen to the boy's remarks, and would then smilingly repeat them to his sire. The moody King started, listened, smiled, but invariably relapsed as soon as his good angel ceased speaking. Full mournful and significant was that spectacle! Not the less so because, both for the aristocracy and the honest bourgeoisie of Labassecour, its peculiarity seemed to be wholly

invisible : I could not discover that one soul present was either struck or touched.

With the King and Queen had entered their court, comprising two or three foreign ambassadors; and with them came the élite of the foreigners then resident in Villette. These took possession of the crimson benches ; the ladies were seated ; most of the men remained standing : their sable rank, lining the background, looked like a dark foil to the splendour displayed in front. Nor was this splendour without varying light and shade and gradation : the middle distance was filled with matrons in velvets and satins, in plumes and gems ; the benches in the foreground, to the Queen's right hand, seemed devoted exclusively to young girls, the flower—perhaps, I should rather say, the bud—of Villette aristocracy. Here were no jewels, no head-dresses, no velvet pile or silken sheen : purity, simplicity, and aërial grace reigned in that virgin band. Young heads simply braided, and fair forms (I was going to write *sylph* forms, but that would have been quite untrue : several of these "jeunes filles," who had not numbered more than sixteen or seventeen years, boasted contours as robust and solid as those of a stout Englishwoman of five-and-twenty)—fair forms robed in white, or pale rose, or placid blue, suggested thoughts of heaven and angels. I knew a couple, at least, of these "rose et blanches" specimens of humanity. Here was a pair of Madame Beck's late pupils—Mesdemoiselles

Mathilde and Angelique: pupils who, during their last year at school, ought to have been in the first class, but whose brains never got them beyond the second division. In English, they had been under my own charge, and hard work it was to get them to translate rationally a page of "The Vicar of Wakefield." Also during three months I had one of them for my vis-à-vis at table, and the quantity of household bread, butter, and stewed fruit she would habitually consume at "second déjeuner" was a real world's wonder—to be exceeded only by the fact of her actually pocketing slices she could not eat. Here be truths—wholesome truths, too.

I knew another of these seraphs—the prettiest, or, at any rate, the least demure and hypocritical-looking of the lot: she was seated by the daughter of an English peer, also an honest, though haughty-looking girl: both had entered in the suite of the British embassy. She (i.e. my acquaintance) had a slight pliant figure, not at all like the forms of the foreign damsels: her hair, too, was not close-braided, like a shell or a skull-cap of satin: it looked *like* hair, and waved from her head, long, curled, and flowing. She chatted away volubly, and seemed full of a light-headed sort of satisfaction with herself and her position. I did not look at Dr. Bretton; but I knew that he, too, saw Ginevra Fanshawe: he had become so quiet, he answered so briefly his mother's remarks, he so often suppressed a sigh. Why should he sigh? He had confessed

a taste for the pursuit of love under difficulties; here was full gratification for that taste. His lady-love beamed upon him from a sphere above his own: he could not come near her; he was not certain that he could win from her a look. I watched to see if she would so far favour him. Our seat was not far from the crimson benches; we must inevitably be seen thence, by eyes so quick and roving as Miss Fanshawe's, and very soon those optics of hers were upon us: at least upon Dr. and Mrs. Bretton. I kept rather in the shade and out of sight, not wishing to be immediately recognized: she looked quite steadily at Dr. John, and then she raised a glass to examine his mother; a minute or two afterwards she laughingly whispered her neighbour; upon the performance commencing, her rambling attention was attracted to the platform.

On the concert I need not dwell; the reader would not care to have my impressions thereanent: and, indeed, it would not be worth while to record them, as they were the impressions of an ignorance crasse. The young ladies of the Conservatoire, being very much frightened, made rather a tremulous exhibition on the two grand pianos. M. Josef Emanuel stood by them while they played; but he had not the tact or influence of his kinsman, who, under similar circumstances, would certainly have *compelled* pupils of his to demean themselves with heroism and self-possession. M. Paul would

have placed the hysteric débutantes between two fires—terror of the audience, and terror of himself —and would have inspired them with the courage of desperation, by making the latter terror incomparably the greater : M. Josef could not do this.

Following the white muslin pianistes, came a fine, full-grown, sulky lady in white satin. She sang. Her singing just affected me like the tricks of a conjurer : I wondered how she did it—how she made her voice run up and down, and cut such marvellous capers ; but a simple Scotch melody, played by a rude street minstrel, has often moved me more deeply.

Afterwards stepped forth a gentleman, who, bending his body a good deal in the direction of the King and Queen, and frequently approaching his white-gloved hand to the region of his heart, vented a bitter outcry against a certain "fausse Isabelle." I thought he seemed especially to solicit the Queen's sympathy ; but, unless I am egregiously mistaken, her Majesty lent her attention rather with the calm of courtesy than the earnestness of interest. This gentleman's state of mind was very harrowing, and I was glad when he wound up his musical exposition of the same.

Some rousing choruses struck me as the best part of the evening's entertainment. There were present deputies from all the best provincial choral societies ; genuine, barrel-shaped, native Labassecouriens. These worthies gave voice without mincing the

matter: their hearty exertions had at least this good result—the ear drank thence a satisfying sense of power.

Through the whole performance—timid instrumental duets, conceited vocal solos, sonorous, brass-lunged choruses—my attention gave but one eye and one ear to the stage, the other being permanently retained in the service of Dr. Bretton: I could not forget him, nor cease to question how he was feeling, what he was thinking, whether he was amused or the contrary. At last he spoke.

"And how do you like it all, Lucy? You are very quiet," he said, in his own cheerful tone.

"I am quiet," I said, "because I am so very, *very* much interested: not merely with the music, but with everything about me."

He then proceeded to make some further remarks, with so much equanimity and composure that I began to think he had really not seen what I had seen, and I whispered,—

"Miss Fanshawe is here: have you noticed her?"

"Oh, yes! and I observed that you noticed her too."

"Is she come with Mrs. Cholmondeley, do you think?"

"Mrs. Cholmondeley is there with a very grand party. Yes; Ginevra was in *her* train; and Mrs. Cholmondeley was in Lady ***'s train, who was in the Queen's train. If this were not one of the compact little minor European courts, whose very

formalities are little more imposing than familiarities, and whose gala grandeur is but homeliness in Sunday array, it would sound all very fine."

"Ginevra saw you, I think?"

"So do I think so. I have had my eye on her several times since you withdrew yours; and I have had the honour of witnessing a little spectacle which you were spared."

I did not ask what; I waited voluntary information, which was presently given.

"Miss Fanshawe," he said, "has a companion with her—a lady of rank. I happen to know Lady Sara by sight; her noble mother has called me in professionally. She is a proud girl, but not in the least insolent, and I doubt whether Ginevra will have gained ground in her estimation by making a butt of her neighbours."

"What neighbours?"

"Merely myself and my mother. As to me it is all very natural: nothing, I suppose, can be fairer game than the young bourgeois doctor; but my mother! I never saw her ridiculed before. Do you know, the curling lip, and sarcastically levelled glass thus directed, gave me a most curious sensation."

"Think nothing of it, Dr. John: it is not worth while. If Ginevra were in a giddy mood, as she is eminently to-night, she would make no scruple of laughing at that mild, pensive Queen, or that melancholy King. She is not actuated by malevo-

lence, but sheer, heedless folly. To a feather-brained school-girl nothing is sacred.

"But you forget: I have not been accustomed to look on Miss Fanshawe in the light of a feather-brained school-girl. Was she not my divinity—the angel of my career?"

"Hem! There was your mistake."

"To speak the honest truth, without any false rant or assumed romance, there actually was a moment, six months ago, when I thought her divine. Do you remember our conversation about the presents? I was not quite open with you in discussing that subject: the warmth with which you took it up amused me. By way of having the full benefit of your lights, I allowed you to think me more in the dark than I really was. It was that test of the presents which first proved Ginevra mortal. Still her beauty retained its fascination: three days—three hours ago, I was very much her slave. As she passed me to-night, triumphant in beauty, my emotions did her homage; but for one luckless sneer, I should yet be the humblest of her servants. She might have scoffed at *me*, and, while wounding, she would not soon have alienated me: through myself, she could not in ten years have done what, in a moment, she has done through my mother."

He held his peace awhile. Never before had I seen so much fire and so little sunshine in Dr. John's blue eye as just now.

"Lucy," he recommenced, "look well at my mother, and say, without fear or favour, in what light she now appears to you."

"As she always does—an English, middle-class gentlewoman; well, though gravely dressed, habitually independent of pretence, constitutionally composed and cheerful."

"So she seems to me—bless her! The merry may laugh *with* mamma, but the weak only will laugh *at* her. She shall not be ridiculed, with my consent, at least; nor without my—my scorn—my antipathy—my——"

He stopped: and it was time—for he was getting excited—more it seemed than the occasion warranted. I did not then know that he had witnessed double cause for dissatisfaction with Miss Fanshawe. The glow of his complexion, the expansion of his nostril, the bold curve which disdain gave his well-cut under-lip, showed him in a new and striking phase. Yet the rare passion of the constitutionally suave and serene is not a pleasant spectacle; nor did I like the sort of vindictive thrill which passed through his strong young frame.

"Do I frighten you, Lucy?" he asked.

"I cannot tell why you are so very angry."

"For this reason," he muttered in my ear. "Ginevra is neither a pure angel nor a pure-minded woman."

"Nonsense! you exaggerate: she has no great harm in her."

"Too much for me. *I* can see where *you* are blind. Now, dismiss the subject. Let me amuse myself by teasing mamma: I will assert that she is flagging. Mamma, pray rouse yourself."

"John, I will certainly rouse you if you are not better conducted. Will you and Lucy be silent, that I may hear the singing?"

They were then thundering in a chorus, under cover of which all the previous dialogue had taken place.

"*You* hear the singing, mamma! Now, I will wager my studs, which are genuine, against your paste brooch—"

"My paste brooch, Graham? Profane boy! you know that it is a stone of value."

"Oh! that is one of your superstitions: you were cheated in the business."

"I am cheated in fewer things than you imagine. How do you happen to be acquainted with young ladies of the court, John? I have observed two of them pay you no small attention during the last half-hour."

"I wish you would not observe them."

"Why not? Because one of them satirically levels her eye-glass at me? She is a pretty, silly girl: but are you apprehensive that her titter will discomfort the old lady?"

"The sensible, admirable old lady! Mother, you are better to me than ten wives yet."

"Don't be demonstrative, John, or I shall faint,

and you will have to carry me out; and if that burden were laid upon you, you would reverse your last speech, and exclaim, 'Mother, ten wives could hardly be worse to me than you are!'"

* * * * * *

The concert over, the Lottery "au bénéfice des pauvres" came next: the interval between was one of general relaxation, and the pleasantest imaginable stir and commotion. The white flock was cleared from the platform; a busy throng of gentlemen crowded it instead, making arrangements for the drawing; and amongst these—the busiest of all—re-appeared that certain well-known form, not tall but active, alive with the energy and movement of three tall men. How M. Paul did work! How he issued directions, and, at the same time, set his own shoulder to the wheel! Half a dozen assistants were at his beck to remove the pianos, etc.; no matter, he must add to their strength his own. The redundancy of his alertness was half-vexing, half-ludicrous; in my mind I both disapproved and derided most of this fuss. Yet, in the midst of prejudice and annoyance, I could not, while watching, avoid perceiving a certain not disagreeable naïveté in all he did and said; nor could I be blind to certain vigorous characteristics of his physiognomy, rendered conspicuous now by the contrast with a throng of tamer faces: the deep, intent keenness of his eye, the power of his forehead, pale, broad, and full—the mobility of his most flexible

mouth. He lacked the calm of force, but its movement and its fire he signally possessed.

Meantime the whole hall was in a stir; most people rose and remained standing, for a change; some walked about, all talked and laughed. The crimson compartment presented a peculiarly animated scene. The long cloud of gentlemen breaking into fragments, mixed with the rainbow line or ladies; two or three officer-like men approached the King and conversed with him. The Queen, leaving her chair, glided along the rank of young ladies, who all stood up as she passed; and to each in turn I saw her vouchsafe some token of kindness —a gracious word, look, or smile. To the two pretty English girls, Lady Sara and Ginevra Fanshawe, she addressed several sentences; as she left them, both, and especially the latter, seemed to glow all over with gratification. They were afterwards accosted by several ladies, and a little circle of gentlemen gathered round them; amongst these —the nearest to Ginevra—stood the Count de Hamal.

"This room is stiflingly hot," said Dr. Bretton, rising with sudden impatience. "Lucy—mother—will you come a moment to the fresh air?"

"Go with him, Lucy," said Mrs. Bretton. "I would rather keep my seat."

Willingly would I have kept mine also, but Graham's desire must take precedence of my own; I accompanied him.

We found the night air keen ; or at least I did : he did not seem to feel it ; but it was very still, and the star-sown sky spread cloudless. I was wrapped in a fur shawl. We took some turns on the pavement ; in passing under a lamp, Graham encountered my eye.

"You look pensive, Lucy : is it on my account ?"

"I was only fearing that you were grieved."

"Not at all : so be of good cheer—as I am. Whenever I die, Lucy, my persuasion is that it will not be of heart-complaint. I may be stung, I may seem to droop for a time, but no pain or malady of sentiment has yet gone through my whole system. You have always seen me cheerful at home ?"

"Generally."

"I am glad she laughed at my mother. I would not give the old lady for a dozen beauties. That sneer did me all the good in the world. Thank you, Miss Fanshawe !" And he lifted his hat from his waved locks, and made a mock reverence.

"Yes," he said, "I thank her. She has made me feel that nine parts in ten of my heart have always been sound as a bell, and the tenth bled from a mere puncture : a lancet-prick that will heal in a trice."

"You are angry just now, heated and indignant ; you will think and feel differently to-morrow."

"*I* heated and indignant ! You don't know me. On the contrary, the heat is gone : I am as cool as the night—which, by the way, may be too cool for you. We will go back."

"Dr. John, this is a sudden change."

"Not it: or if it be, there are good reasons for it—two good reasons: I have told you one. But now let us re-enter."

We did not easily regain our seats; the lottery was begun, and all was excited confusion; crowds blocked the sort of corridor along which we had to pass: it was necessary to pause for a time. Happening to glance round—indeed I half fancied I heard my name pronounced—I saw quite near, the ubiquitous, the inevitable M. Paul. He was looking at me gravely and intently: at me, or rather at my pink dress—sardonic comment on which gleamed in his eye. Now it was his habit to indulge in strictures on the dress, both of the teachers and pupils, at Madame Beck's—a habit which the former, at least, held to be an offensive impertinence: as yet I had not suffered from it—my sombre daily attire not being calculated to attract notice. I was in no mood to permit any new encroachment to-night: rather than accept his banter, I would ignore his presence, and accordingly steadily turned my face to the sleeve of Dr. John's coat; finding in that same black sleeve a prospect more redolent of pleasure and comfort, more genial, more friendly, I thought, than was offered by the dark little Professor's unlovely visage. Dr. John seemed unconsciously to sanction the preference by looking down and saying in his kind voice:

"Ay, keep close to my side, Lucy: these crowding burghers are no respecters of persons."

I could not, however, be true to myself. Yielding to some influence, mesmeric or otherwise—an influence unwelcome, displeasing, but effective—I again glanced round to see if M. Paul was gone. No, there he stood on the same spot, looking still, but with a changed eye; he had penetrated my thought, and read my wish to shun him. The mocking but not ill-humoured gaze was turned to a swarthy frown, and when I bowed, with a view to conciliation, I got only the stiffest and sternest of nods in return.

"Whom have you made angry, Lucy?" whispered Dr. Bretton, smiling. "Who is that savage-looking friend of yours?"

"One of the professors at Madame Beck's: a very cross little man."

"He looks mighty cross just now: what have you done to him? What is it all about? Ah, Lucy, Lucy! tell me the meaning of this."

"No mystery, I assure you. M. Emanuel is very exigeant, and because I looked at your coat-sleeve, instead of curtsying and dipping to him, he thinks I have failed in respect."

"The little——" began Dr. John: I know not what more he would have added, for at that moment I was nearly thrown down amongst the feet of the crowd. M. Paul had rudely pushed past, and was elbowing his way with such utter disregard to the convenience and security of all around, that a very uncomfortable pressure was the consequence.

"I think he is what he himself would call 'méchant,'" said Dr. Bretton. I thought so too.

Slowly and with difficulty we made our way along the passage, and at last regained our seats. The drawing of the lottery lasted nearly an hour; it was an animating and amusing scene; and as we each held tickets, we shared in the alternations of hope and fear raised by each turn of the wheel. Two little girls, of five and six years old, drew the numbers: and the prizes were duly proclaimed from the platform. These prizes were numerous, though of small value. It so fell out that Dr. John and I each gained one: mine was a cigar-case, his a lady's head-dress—a most airy sort of blue and silver turban, with a streamer of plumage on one side, like a snowy cloud. He was excessively anxious to make an exchange; but I could not be brought to hear reason, and to this day I keep my cigar-case; it serves, when I look at it, to remind me of old times, and one happy evening.

Dr. John, for his part, held his turban at arm's length between his finger and thumb, and looked at it with a mixture of reverence and embarrassment highly provocative of laughter. The contemplation over, he was about coolly to deposit the delicate fabric on the ground between his feet; he seemed to have no shadow of an idea of the treatment or stowage it ought to receive: if his mother had not come to the rescue, I think he would finally have crushed it under his arm like an opera-hat;

she restored it to the band-box whence it had issued.

Graham was quite cheerful all the evening, and his cheerfulness seemed natural and unforced. His demeanour, his look, is not easily described; there was something in it peculiar, and, in its way, original. I read in it no common mastery of the passions, and a fund of deep and healthy strength which, without any exhausting effort, bore down Disappointment and extracted her fang. His manner now reminded me of qualities I had noticed in him when professionally engaged amongst the poor, the guilty, and the suffering, in the Basse-Ville: he looked at once determined, enduring, and sweet-tempered. Who could help liking him? *He* betrayed no weakness which harassed all your feelings with considerations as to how its faltering must be propped; from *him* broke no irritability which startled calm and quenched mirth; *his* lips let fall no caustic that burned to the bone; *his* eye shot no morose shafts that went cold, and rusty, and venomed through your heart: beside him was rest and refuge—around him, fostering sunshine.

And yet he had neither forgiven nor forgotten Miss Fanshawe. Once angered, I doubt if Dr. Bretton were to be soon propitiated—once alienated, whether he were ever to be reclaimed. He looked at her more than once; not stealthily or humbly, but with a movement of hardy, open observation. De Hamal was now a fixture beside her; Mrs.

Cholmondeley sat near, and they and she were wholly absorbed in the discourse, mirth, and excitement, with which the crimson seats were as much astir as any plebeian part of the hall. In the course of some apparently animated discussion, Ginevra once or twice lifted her hand and arm; a handsome bracelet gleamed upon the latter. I saw that its gleam flickered in Dr. John's eye—quickening therein a derisive, ireful sparkle; he laughed :—

"I think," he said, "I will lay my turban on my wonted altar of offerings; there, at any rate, it would be certain to find favour: no grisette has a more facile faculty of acceptance. Strange! for after all, I know she is a girl of family."

"But you don't know her education, Dr. John," said I. "Tossed about all her life from one foreign school to another, she may justly proffer the plea of ignorance in extenuation of most of her faults. And then, from what she says, I believe her father and mother were brought up much as she has been brought up."

"I always understood she had no fortune; and once I had pleasure in the thought," said he.

"She tells me," I answered, "that they are poor at home: she always speaks quite candidly on such points: you never find her lying, as these foreigners will often lie. Her parents have a large family: they occupy such a station and possess such connections as, in their opinion, demand display; stringent necessity of circumstances and inherent

thoughtlessness of disposition combined, have engendered reckless unscrupulousness as to how they obtain the means of sustaining a good appearance. This is the state of things, and the only state of things she has seen from childhood upwards."

"I believe it—and I thought to mould her to something better; but, Lucy, to speak the plain truth, I have felt a new thing to-night, in looking at her and De Hamal. I felt it before noticing the impertinence directed at my mother. I saw a look interchanged between them immediately after their entrance, which threw a most unwelcome light on my mind."

"How do you mean? You have been long aware of the flirtation they keep up?"

"Ay, flirtation! That might be an innocent girlish wile to lure on the true lover; but what I refer to was not flirtation: it was a look marking mutual and secret understanding—it was neither girlish nor innocent. No woman, were she as beautiful as Aphrodite, who could give or receive such a glance, shall ever be sought in marriage by me: I would rather wed a paysanne in a short petticoat and high cap—and be sure that she was honest."

I could not help smiling. I felt sure he now exaggerated the case: Ginevra, I was certain, was honest enough, with all her giddiness. I told him so. He shook his head, and said he would not be the man to trust her with his honour.

"The only thing," said I, "with which you may safely trust her. She would unscrupulously damage a husband's purse and property, recklessly try his patience and temper: I don't think she would breathe, or let another breathe, on his honour."

"You are becoming her advocate," said he. "Do you wish me to resume my old chains?"

"No: I am glad to see you free, and trust that free you will long remain. Yet be, at the same time, just."

"I am so: just as Rhadamanthus, Lucy. When once I am thoroughly estranged, I cannot help being severe. But look! the King and Queen are rising. I like that Queen: she has a sweet countenance. Mamma, too, is excessively tired: we shall never get the old lady home if we stay longer."

"I tired, John?" cried Mrs. Bretton, looking at least as animated and as wide-awake as her son, "I would undertake to sit you out yet: leave us both here till morning, and we should see which would look the most jaded by sunrise."

"I should not like to try the experiment; for, in truth, mamma, you are the most unfading of evergreens and the freshest of matrons. It must then be on the plea of your son's delicate nerves and fragile constitution that I found a petition for our speedy adjournment."

"Indolent young man! You wish you were in bed, no doubt; and I suppose you must be humoured. There is Lucy, too, looking quite done

up. For shame, Lucy! At your age a week of evenings-out would not have made me a shade paler. Come away, both of you; and you may laugh at the old lady as much as you please, but, for my part, I shall take charge of the band-box and turban."

Which she did accordingly. I offered to relieve her, but was shaken off with kindly contempt: my godmother opined that I had enough to do to take care of myself. Not standing on ceremony now, in the midst of the gay "confusion worse confounded" succeeding to the King and Queen's departure, Mrs. Bretton preceded us, and promptly made us a lane through the crowd. Graham followed, apostrophizing his mother as the most flourishing grisette it had ever been his good fortune to see charged with carriage of a band-box; he also desired me to mark her affection for the sky-blue turban, and announced his conviction that she intended one day to wear it.

The night was now very cold and very dark, but with little delay we found the carriage. Soon we were packed in it, as warm and as snug as at a fire-side; and the drive home was, I think, still pleasanter than the drive to the concert. Pleasant it was, even though the coachman—having spent in the shop of a "marchand de vin" a portion of the time we passed at the concert—drove us along the dark and solitary chaussée, far past the turn leading down to La Terrasse; we, who were occupied in talking and laughing, not noticing the aberration till, at

last, Mrs. Bretton intimated that though she had always thought the chateau a retired spot, she did not know it was situated at the world's end, as she declared seemed now to be the case, for she believed we had been an hour and a half en route, and had not yet taken the turn down the avenue.

Then Graham looked out, and perceiving only dim-spread fields, with unfamiliar rows of pollards and limes ranged along their else invisible sunk-fences, began to conjecture how matters were, and calling a halt and descending, he mounted the box and took the reins himself. Thanks to him, we arrived safe at home about an hour and a half beyond our time.

Martha had not forgotten us; a cheerful fire was burning, and a neat supper spread in the dining-room: we were glad of both. The winter dawn was actually breaking before we gained our chambers. I took off my pink dress and lace mantle with happier feelings than I had experienced in putting them on. Not all, perhaps, who had shone brightly arrayed at that concert could say the same; for not all had been satisfied with friendship —with its calm comfort and modest hope.

CHAPTER XXI.

REACTION.

YET three days, and then I must go back to the pensionnat. I almost numbered the moments of these days upon the clock; fain would I have retarded their flight; but they glided by while I watched them: they were already gone while I yet feared their departure.

"Lucy will not leave us to-day," said Mrs. Bretton coaxingly, at breakfast; "she knows we can procure a second respite."

"I would not ask for one if I might have it for a word," said I. "I long to get the good-bye over, and to be settled in the Rue Fossette again. I must go this morning: I must go directly; my trunk is packed and corded."

It appeared, however, that my going depended upon Graham; he had said he would accompany me, and it so fell out that he was engaged all day, and only returned home at dusk. Then ensued a little combat of words. Mrs. Bretton and her son pressed me to remain one night more. I could

have cried, so irritated and eager was I to be gone. I longed to leave them as the criminal on the scaffold longs for the axe to descend: that is, I wished the pang over. How much I wished it, they could not tell. On these points, mine was a state of mind out of their experience.

It was dark when Dr. John handed me from the carriage at Madame Beck's door. The lamp above was lit; it rained a November drizzle, as it had rained all day: the lamplight gleamed on the wet pavement. Just such a night was it as that on which, not a year ago, I had first stopped at this very threshold; just similar was the scene. I remembered the very shapes of the paving-stones which I had noted with idle eye, while, with a thick-beating heart, I waited the unclosing of that door at which I stood—a solitary and a suppliant. On that night, too, I had briefly met him who now stood with me! Had I ever reminded him of that rencontre, or explained it? I had not, nor ever felt the inclination to do so: it was a pleasant thought, laid by in my own mind, and best kept there.

Graham rung the bell. The door was instantly opened, for it was just that period of the evening when the half-borders took their departure—consequently, Rosine was on the alert.

"Don't come in," said I to him; but he stepped a moment into the well-lighted vestibule. I had

not wished him to see that "the water stood in my eyes," for his was too kind a nature ever to be needlessly shown such signs of sorrow. He always wished to heal—to relieve—when, physician as he was, neither cure nor alleviation was, perhaps, in his power.

"Keep up your courage, Lucy. Think of my mother and myself as true friends. We will not forget you."

"Nor will I forget you, Dr. John."

My trunk was now brought in. We had shaken hands; he had turned to go, but he was not satisfied: he had not done or said enough to content his generous impulses.

"Lucy"—stepping after me—"shall you feel very solitary here?"

"At first I shall."

"Well, my mother will soon call to see you; and meantime, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write—just any cheerful nonsense that comes into my head shall I?"

"Good, gallant heart!" thought I to myself; but I shook my head, smiling, and said, "Never think of it: impose on yourself no such task. *You* write to *me!*—you'll not have time."

"Oh! I will find or make time. Good-bye."

He was gone. The heavy door crashed to: the axe had fallen—the pang was experienced.

Allowing myself no time to think or feel—swallowing tears as if they had been wine—I passed to

Madame's sitting-room to pay the necessary visit of ceremony and respect. She received me with perfectly well-acted cordiality—was even demonstrative, though brief, in her welcome. In ten minutes I was dismissed. From the salle-à-manger I proceeded to the refectory, where pupils and teachers were now assembled for evening study: again I had a welcome, and one not, I think, quite hollow. That over, I was free to repair to the dormitory.

"And will Graham really write?" I questioned, as I sank tired on the edge of the bed.

Reason, coming stealthily up to me through the twilight of that long, dim chamber, whispered sedately,—

"He may write once. So kind is his nature, it may stimulate him for once to make the effort. But it *cannot* be continued—it *may* not be repeated. Great were that folly which should build on such a promise—insane that credulity which should mistake the transitory rain-pool holding in its hollow one draught, for the perennial spring yielding the supply of seasons.

I bent my head: I sat thinking an hour longer. Reason still whispered me, laying on my shoulder a withered hand, and frostily touching my ear with the chill blue lips of eld.

"If," muttered she, "if he *should* write, what then? Do you meditate pleasure in replying? Ah, fool! I warn you! Brief be your answer. Hope

no delight of heart—no indulgence of intellect: grant no expansion to feeling—give holiday to no single faculty: dally with no friendly exchange: foster no genial intercommunion. . . ."

"But I have talked to Graham and you did not chide," I pleaded.

"No," said she, "I needed not. Talk for you is good discipline. You converse imperfectly. While you speak, there can be no oblivion of inferiority—no encouragement to delusion: pain, privation, penury, stamp your language . . ."

"But," I again broke in, "where the bodily presence is weak and the speech contemptible, surely there cannot be error in making written language the medium of better utterance than faltering lips can achieve?"

Reason only answered, "At your peril you cherish that idea, or suffer its influence to animate any writing of yours!"

"But if I feel, may I *never* express?"

"*Never!*" declared Reason.

I groaned under her bitter sternness. Never —never — oh, hard word! This hag, this Reason, would not let me look up, or smile, or hope: she could not rest unless I were altogether crushed, cowed, broken-in, and broken-down. According to her, I was born only to work for a piece of bread, to await the pains of death, and steadily through all life to despond. Reason might be right; yet no wonder we are glad at times

to defy her, to rush from under her rod and give a truant hour to imagination—*her* soft, bright foe, *our* sweet Help, our divine Hope. We shall and must break bounds at intervals, despite the terrible revenge that awaits our return. Reason is vindictive as a devil: for me she was always envenomed as a step-mother. If I have obeyed her it has chiefly been with the obedience of fear, not of love. Long ago I should have died of ill-usage; her stint, her chill, her barren board, her icy bed, her savage, ceaseless blows; but for that kinder Power who holds my secret and sworn allegiance. Often has Reason turned me out by night, in mid-winter, on cold snow, flinging for sustenance the gnawed bone dogs had forsaken: sternly has she vowed her stores held nothing more for me—harshly denied my right to ask better things. . . . Then, looking up, have I seen in the sky a head amidst circling stars, of which the midmost and the brightest lent a ray sympathetic and attent. A spirit, softer and better than Human Reason, has descended with quiet flight to the waste—bringing all round her a sphere of air borrowed of eternal summer; bringing perfumes of flowers which cannot fade—fragrance of trees whose fruit is life; bringing breezes pure from a world whose day needs no sun to lighten it. My hunger has this good angel appeased with food, sweet and strange, gathered amongst gleaning angels, garnering their dew-white harvest in the first fresh hour of a heavenly day; tenderly has she

assuaged the insufferable tears which weep away life itself—kindly given rest to deadly weariness—generously lent hope and impulse to paralyzed despair. Divine, compassionate, succourable influence! When I bend the knee to other than God, it shall be at thy white and winged feet, beautiful on mountain or on plain. Temples have been reared to the Sun—altars dedicated to the Moon. Oh, greater glory! To thee neither hands build, nor lips consecrate; but hearts, through ages, are faithful to thy worship. A dwelling thou hast, too wide for walls, too high for dome—a temple whose floors are space—rites whose mysteries transpire in presence, to the kindling, the harmony of worlds!

Sovereign complete! thou hast, for endurance, thy great army of martyrs; for achievement, thy chosen band of worthies. Deity unquestioned, thine essence foils decay!

This daughter of Heaven remembered me to-night; she saw me weep, and she came with comfort: "Sleep," she said. "Sleep sweetly—I gild thy dreams!"

She kept her word, and watched me through a night's rest; but at dawn Reason relieved the guard. I awoke with a sort of start; the rain was dashing against the panes, and the wind uttering a peevish cry at intervals; the night-lamp was dying on the black circular stand in the middle of the dormitory: day had already broken. How I pity

those whom mental pain stuns instead of rousing! This morning the pang of waking snatched me out of bed like a hand with a giant's gripe. How quickly I dressed in the cold of the raw dawn! How deeply I drank of the ice-cold water in my carafe! This was always my cordial, to which, like other dram-drinkers, I had eager recourse when unsettled by chagrin.

Ere long the bell rang its *réveillée* to the whole school. Being dressed, I descended alone to the refectory, where the stove was lit and the air was warm; through the rest of the house it was cold, with the nipping severity of a continental winter: though now but the beginning of November, a north wind had thus early brought a wintry blight over Europe. I remember the black stoves pleased me little when I first came; but now I began to associate with them a sense of comfort, and liked them, as in England we like a fireside.

Sitting down before this dark comforter, I presently fell into a deep argument with myself on life and its chances, on destiny and her decrees. My mind, calmer and stronger now than last night, made for itself some imperious rules, prohibiting under deadly penalties all weak retrospect of happiness past; commanding a patient journeying through the wilderness of the present, enjoining a reliance on faith—a watching of the cloud and pillar which subdue while they guide, and awe while they illumine—hushing the impulse to fond idolatry,

checking the longing outlook for a far-off promised land whose rivers are, perhaps, never to be reached save in dying dreams, whose sweet pastures are to be viewed but from the desolate and sepulchral summit of a Nebo.

By degrees, a composite feeling of blended strength and pain wound itself wirily round my heart, sustained, or at least restrained, its throbbings, and made me fit for the day's work. I lifted my head.

As I said before, I was sitting near the stove, let into the wall beneath the refectory and the carré, and thus sufficing to heat both apartments. Piercing the same wall, and close beside the stove, was a window, looking also into the carré; as I looked up a cap-tassel, a brow, two eyes, filled a pane of that window; the fixed gaze of those two eyes hit right against my own glance: they were watching me. I had not till that moment known that tears were on my cheek, but I felt them now.

This was a strange house, where no corner was sacred from intrusion, where not a tear could be shed, nor a thought pondered, but a spy was at hand to note and to divine. And this new, this out-door, this male spy, what business had brought him to the premises at this unwonted hour? What possible right had he to intrude on me thus? No other professor would have dared to cross the carré before the class-bell rang. M. Emanuel took no account of hours nor of claims: there was some book

of reference in the first-class library which he had occasion to consult; he had come to seek it: on his way he passed the refectory. It was very much his habit to wear eyes before, behind, and on each side of him: he had seen me through the little window—he now opened the refectory door, and there he stood.

"Mademoiselle, vous êtes triste."

"Monsieur, j'en ai bien le droit."

"Vous êtes malade de cœur et d'humeur," he pursued. "You are at once mournful and mutinous. I see on your cheek two tears which I know are hot as two sparks, and salt as two crystals of the sea. While I speak you eye me strangely. Shall I tell you of what I am reminded while watching you?"

"Monsieur, I shall be called away to prayers shortly; my time for conversation is very scant and brief at this hour—excuse——"

"I excuse everything," he interrupted; "my mood is so meek, neither rebuff nor, perhaps, insult could ruffle it. You remind me, then, of a young she wild creature, new caught, untamed, viewing with a mixture of fire and fear the first entrance of the breaker-in."

Unwarrantable accost!—rash and rude if addressed to a pupil; to a teacher inadmissible. He thought to provoke a warm reply: I had seen him vex the passionate to explosion before now. In me his malice should find no gratification; I sat silent.

"You look," said he, "like one who would snatch at a draught of sweet poison, and spurn wholesome bitters with disgust."

"Indeed, I never liked bitters: nor do I believe them wholesome. And to whatever is sweet, be it poison or food, you cannot, at least, deny its own delicious quality—sweetness. Better, perhaps, to die quickly a pleasant death, than drag on long a charmless life."

"Yet," said he, "you should take your bitter dose duly and daily, if I had the power to administer it; and, as to the well-beloved poison, I would, perhaps, break the very cup which held it."

I sharply turned my head away, partly because his presence utterly displeased me, and partly because I wished to shun questions: lest in my present mood, the effort of answering should overmaster self-command.

"Come," said he, more softly, "tell me the truth—you grieve at being parted from friends—is it not so?"

The insinuating softness was not more acceptable than the inquisitorial curiosity. I was silent. He came into the room, sat down on the bench about two yards from me, and persevered long, and, for him, patiently, in attempts to draw me into conversation—attempts necessarily unavailing, because I *could* not talk. At last I entreated to be let alone. In uttering the request, my voice faltered, my head sank on my arms and the table. I wept bitterly, though quietly.

He sat a while longer. I did not look up nor speak, till the closing door and his retreating step told me that he was gone. These tears proved a relief.

I had time to bathe my eyes before breakfast, and I suppose I appeared at that meal as serene as any other person : not, however, quite as jocund-looking as the young lady who placed herself in the seat opposite mine, fixed on me a pair of somewhat small eyes twinkling gleefully, and frankly stretched across the table a white hand to be shaken. Miss Fanshawe's travels, gaieties, and flirtations agreed with her mightily ; she had become quite plump, her cheeks looked as round as apples. I had seen her last in elegant evening attire. I don't know that she looked less charming now in her school-dress, a kind of careless peignoir of a dark-blue material, dimly and dingily plaided with black. I even think this dusky wrapper gave her charms a triumph ; enhancing by contrast the fairness of her skin, the freshness of her bloom, the golden beauty of her tresses.

"I am glad you are come back, Timon," said she. Timon was one of her dozen names for me. "You don't know how often I have wanted you in this dismal hole."

"Oh, have you? Then of course, if you wanted me, you have something for me to do : stockings to mend, perhaps." I never gave Ginevra a minute's or a farthing's credit for disinterestedness.

"Crabbed and crusty as ever!" said she. "I

expected as much : it would not be you if you did not snub one. But now, come, grandmother, I hope you like coffee as much, and pistolets as little as ever : are you disposed to barter ? "

"Take your own way."

This way consisted in a habit she had of making me convenient. She did not like the morning cup of coffee ; its school brewage not being strong or sweet enough to suit her palate ; and she had an excellent appetite, like any other healthy school-girl, for the morning pistolets or rolls, which were new baked and very good, and of which a certain allowance was served to each. This allowance being more than I needed, I gave half to Ginevra ; never varying in my preference, though many others used to covet the superfluity ; and she in return would sometimes give me a portion of her coffee. This morning I was glad of the draught ; hunger I had none, and with thirst I was parched. I don't know why I chose to give my bread rather to Ginevra than to another ; nor why, if two had to share the convenience of one drinking-vessel, as sometimes happened—for instance, when we took a long walk into the country, and halted for refreshment at a farm—I always contrived that she should be my convive, and rather liked to let her take the lion's share, whether of the white beer, the sweet wine, or the new milk : so it was, however, and she knew it ; and, therefore, while we wrangled daily, we were never alienated.

After breakfast my custom was to withdraw to the first classe, and sit and read, or think (oftenest the latter), there alone, till the nine o'clock bell threw open all doors, admitted the gathered rush of externes and demi-pensionnaires, and gave the signal for entrance on that bustle and business to which, till five p.m., there was no relax.

I was just seated this morning, when a tap came to the door.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," said a pensionnaire, entering gently; and having taken from her desk some necessary book or paper, she withdrew on tiptoe, murmuring as she passed me, "Que mademoiselle est appliquée!"

Appliquée, indeed! The means of application were spread before me, but I was doing nothing; and had done nothing and meant to do nothing. Thus does the world give us credit for merits we have not. Madame Beck herself deemed me a regular blas-bleu, and often and solemnly used to warn me not to study too much, lest "the blood should all go to my head." Indeed, everybody in the Rue Fossette held a superstition that "Meess Lucie" was learned; with the notable exception of M. Emanuel, who, by means peculiar to himself, and quite inscrutable to me, had obtained a not inaccurate inkling of my real qualifications, and used to take quiet opportunities of chuckling in my ear his malign glee over their scant measure. For my part, I never troubled myself about this penury.

I dearly like to think my own thoughts; I had great pleasure in reading a few books, but not many: preferring always those on whose style or sentiment the writer's individual nature was plainly stamped; flagging inevitably over characterless books, however clever and meritorious; perceiving well that, as far as my own mind was concerned, God had limited its powers and its action—thankful, I trust, for the gift bestowed, but unambitious of higher endowments, not restlessly eager after higher culture.

The polite pupil was scarcely gone, when, unceremoniously, without tap, in burst a second intruder. Had I been blind I should have known who this was. A constitutional reserve of manner had by this time told with wholesome and, for me, commodious effect, on the manners of my co-inmates; rarely did I now suffer from rude or intrusive treatment. When I first came, it would happen once and again that a blunt German would clap me on the shoulder, and ask me to run a race; or a riotous Labassecourienne seize me by the arm and drag me towards the playground: urgent proposals to take a swing at the "Pas de Géant," or to join in a certain romping hide-and-seek game called "Un, deux, trois," were formerly also of hourly occurrence; but all these little attentions had ceased some time ago—ceased, too, without my finding it necessary to be at the trouble of point-blank cutting them short. I had now no familiar

demonstration to dread or endure, save from one quarter; and as that was English I could bear it. Ginevra Fanshawe made no scruple of—at times—catching me as I was crossing the carré, whirling me round in a compulsory waltz, and heartily enjoying the mental and physical discomfiture her proceeding induced. Ginevra Fanshawe it was who now broke in upon "my learned leisure." She carried a huge music-book under her arm.

"Go to your practising," said I to her at once: "away with you to the little salon!"

"Not till I have had a talk with you, chère amie. I know where you have been spending your vacation, and how you have commenced sacrificing to the graces, and enjoying life like any other belle. I saw you at the concert the other night, dressed, actually, like anybody else. Who is your tailleuse?"

"Tittle-tattle: how prettily it begins! My tailleuse!—a fiddlestick! Come, sheer off, Ginevra. I really don't want your company."

"But when I want yours so much, ange farouche, what does a little reluctance on your part signify? Dieu merci! we know how to manœuvre with our gifted compatriote—the learned 'ourse Britannique.' And so, Ourson, you know Isidore?"

"I know John Bretton."

"Oh, hush!" (putting her fingers in her ears) "you crack my tympanums with your rude Anglicisms. But, how is our well-beloved John?

Do tell me about him. The poor man must be in a sad way. What did he say to my behaviour the other night? Wasn't I cruel?"

"Do you think I noticed you?"

"It was a delightful evening. Oh, that divine De Hamal! And then to watch the other sulking and dying in the distance; and the old lady—my future mamma-in-law! But I am afraid I and Lady Sara were a little rude in quizzing her."

"Lady Sara never quizzed her at all; and for what *you* did, don't make yourself in the least uneasy: Mrs. Bretton will survive *your* sneer."

"She may: old ladies are tough; but that poor son of hers! Do tell me what he said: I saw he was terribly cut up."

"He said you looked as if at heart you were already Madame de Hamal."

"Did he?" she cried with delight. "He noticed that? How charming! I thought he would be mad with jealousy!"

"Ginevra, have you seriously done with Dr. Bretton? Do you want him to give you up?"

"Oh, you know he *can't* do that: but wasn't he mad?"

"Quite mad," I assented; "as mad as a March hare."

"Well, and how *ever* did you get him home?"

"How *ever*, indeed! Have you no pity on his poor mother and me? Fancy us holding him tight down in the carriage, and he raving between us, fit

to drive everybody delirious. The very coachman went wrong, somehow, and we lost our way."

"You don't say so? You are laughing at me. Now, Lucy Snowe——"

"I assure you it is fact—and fact, also, that Dr. Bretton would *not* stay in the carriage: he broke from us, and *would* ride outside."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards—when he *did* reach home—the scene transcends description."

"Oh, but describe it—you know it is such fun!"

"Fun for *you*, Miss Fanshawe; but" (with stern gravity) "you know the proverb—'What is sport to one may be death to another.'"

"Go on, there's a darling Timon."

"Conscientiously, I cannot, unless you assure me you have some heart."

"I have—such an immensity, you don't know!"

"Good! In that case, you will be able to conceive Dr. Graham Bretton rejecting his supper in the first instance—the chicken, the sweet-bread prepared for his refreshment, left on the table untouched. Then—but it is of no use dwelling at length on the harrowing details. Suffice it to say, that never, in the most stormy fits and moments of his infancy, had his mother such work to tuck the sheets about him as she had that night."

"He wouldn't lie still?"

"He wouldn't lie still: there it was. The

sheets might be tucked in, but the thing was to keep them tucked in."

"And what did he say?"

"Say! Can't you imagine him demanding his divine Ginevra, anathematizing that demon, De Hamal—raving about golden locks, blue eyes, white arms, glittering bracelets?"

"No, did he? He saw the bracelet?"

"Saw the bracelet? Yes, as plain as I saw it: and, perhaps, for the first time, he saw also the brand-mark with which its pressure has encircled your arm. Ginevra" (rising, and changing my tone), "come, we will have an end of this. Go away to your practising." And I opened the door.

"But you have not told me all."

"You had better not wait until I *do* tell you all. Such extra communicativeness could give you no pleasure. March!"

"Cross thing!" said she; but she obeyed; and, indeed, the first classe was my territory, and she could not there legally resist a notice of quittance from me.

Yet, to speak the truth, never had I been less dissatisfied with her than I was then. There was pleasure in thinking of the contrast between the reality and my description—to remember Dr. John enjoying the drive home, eating his supper with relish, and retiring to rest with Christian composure. It was only when I saw him really unhappy that I

felt really vexed with the fair, frail cause of his suffering.

* * * * * *

A fortnight passed; I was getting once more inured to the harness of school, and lapsing from the passionate pain of change to the palsy of custom. One afternoon, in crossing the carré, on my way to the first classe, where I was expected to assist at a lesson of "style and literature," I saw, standing by one of the long and large windows, Rosine, the portress. Her attitude, as usual, was quite nonchalante. She always "stood at ease"; one of her hands rested in her apron-pocket, the other at this moment held to her eyes a letter, whereof Mademoiselle coolly perused the address, and deliberately studied the seal.

A letter! The shape of a letter similar to that had haunted my brain in its very core for seven days past. I had dreamed of a letter last night. Strong magnetism drew me to that letter now; yet, whether I should have ventured to demand of Rosine so much as a glance at that white envelope, with the spot of red wax in the middle, I know not. No; I think I should have sneaked past in terror of a rebuff from Disappointment: my heart throbbed now as if I already heard the tramp of her approach. Nervous mistake! It was the rapid step of the Professor of Literature measuring the corridor. I fled before him. Could I but be seated quietly at my desk before his arrival, with the class under my

orders all in disciplined readiness, he would, perhaps, exempt me from notice; but, if caught lingering in the carré, I should be sure to come in for a special harangue. I had time to get seated, to enforce perfect silence, to take out my work and to commence it amidst the profoundest and best trained hush, ere M. Emanuel entered with his vehement burst of latch and panel, and his deep, redundant bow, prophetic of choler.

As usual he broke upon us like a clap of thunder; but instead of flashing lightning-wise from the door to the estrade, his career halted midway at my desk. Setting his face towards me and the window, his back to the pupils and the room, he gave me a look—such a look as might have licensed me to stand straight up and demand what he meant—a look of scowling distrust.

"Voilà! pour vous," said he, drawing his hand from his waistcoat, and placing on my desk a letter —the very letter I had seen in Rosine's hand—the letter whose face of enamelled white and single Cyclop's-eye of vermilion-red had printed themselves so clear and perfect on the retina of an inward vision. I knew it, I felt it to be the letter of my hope, the fruition of my wish, the release from my doubt, the ransom from my terror. This letter M. Paul, with his unwarrantably interfering habits, had taken from the portress, and now delivered it himself.

I might have been angry, but had not a second

for the sensation. Yes: I held in my hand not a slight note, but an envelope, which must, at least, contain a sheet: it felt not flimsy, but firm, substantial, satisfying. And here was the direction, "Miss Lucy Snowe," in a clean, clear, equal, decided hand; and here was the seal, round, full, deftly dropped by untremulous fingers, stamped with the well-cut impress of initials, "J. G. B." I experienced a happy feeling—a glad emotion which went warm to my heart, and ran lively through all my veins. For once a hope was realized. I held in my hand a morsel of real solid joy: not a dream, not an image of the brain, not one of those shadowy chances imagination pictures, and on which humanity starves but cannot live; not a mess of that manna I drearily eulogized awhile ago—which, indeed, at first melts on the lips with an unspeakable and preternatural sweetness, but which, in the end, our souls full surely loathe; longing deliriously for natural and earth-grown food, wildly praying Heaven's Spirits to reclaim their own spirit-dew and essence—an aliment divine, but for mortals deadly. It was neither sweet hail nor small coriander-seed—neither slight wafer, nor luscious honey, I had lighted on; it was the wild, savoury mess of the hunter, nourishing and salubrious meat, forest-fed or desert-reared, fresh, healthful, and life-sustaining. It was what the old dying patriarch demanded of his son Esau, promising in requital the blessing of his last breath. It was a godsend and I inwardly

thanked the God who had vouchsafed it. Outwardly I only thanked man, crying, "Thank you, thank you, monsieur!"

Monsieur curled his lip, gave me a vicious glance of the eye, and strode to his estrade. M. Paul was not at all a good little man, though he had good points.

Did I read my letter there and then? Did I consume the venison at once and with haste, as if Esau's shaft flew every day?

I knew better. The cover with its address—the seal, with its three clear letters—was bounty and abundance for the present. I stole from the room, I procured the key of the great dormitory which was kept locked by day. I went to my bureau; with a sort of haste and trembling lest Madame should creep upstairs and spy me, I opened a drawer, unlocked a box, and took out a case, and—having feasted my eyes with one more look, and approached the seal with a mixture of awe and shame and delight, to my lips—I folded the untasted treasure, yet all fair and inviolate, in silver paper, committed it to the case, shut up box and drawer, reclosed, relocked the dormitory, and returned to class, feeling as if fairy tales were true and fairy gifts no dream. Strange, sweet insanity! And this letter, the source of my joy, I had not yet read: did not yet know the number of its lines.

When I re-entered the school-room, behold M. Paul raging like a pestilence! Some pupil had not

spoken audibly or distinctly enough to suit his ear and taste, and now she and others were weeping, and he was raving from his estrade almost livid. Curious to mention, as I appeared, he fell on me.

"Was I the mistress of these girls? Did I profess to teach them the conduct befitting ladies? —and did I permit and, he doubted not, encourage them to strangle their mother-tongue in their throats, to mince and mash it between their teeth, as if they had some base cause to be ashamed of the words they uttered? Was this modesty? He knew better. It was a vile pseudo sentiment—the offspring or the forerunner of evil. Rather than submit to this mopping and mowing, this mincing and grimacing, this grinding of a noble tongue, this general affectation and sickening stubbornness of the pupils of the first class, he would throw them up for a set of insupportable petites maîtresses, and confine himself to teaching the A B C to the babies of the third division."

What could I say to all this? Really nothing; and I hoped he would allow me to be silent. The storm recommenced.

"Every answer to his queries was then refused? It seemed to be considered in *that* place—that conceited boudoir of a first class, with its pretentious book-cases, its green-baized desks, its rubbish of flower-stands, its trash of framed pictures and maps, and its foreign surveillante, forsooth!—it seemed to be the fashion to think *there* that the Professor of

Literature was not worthy of a reply! These were new ideas; imported, he did not doubt, straight from 'la Grande Bretaigne': they savoured of island insolence and arrogance."

Lull the second—the girls, not one of whom was ever known to weep a tear for the rebukes of any other master, now all melting like snow-statues before the intemperate heat of M. Emanuel: I not yet much shaken, sitting down, and venturing to resume my work.

Something—either in my continued silence or in the movement of my hand, stitching—transported M. Emanuel beyond the last boundary of patience; he actually sprang from his estrade. The stove stood near my desk, he attacked it; the little iron door was nearly dashed from its hinges, the fuel was made to fly.

"Est-ce que vous avez l'intention de m'insulter?" said he to me, in a low, furious voice, as he thus outraged, under pretence of arranging, the fire.

It was time to soothe him a little if possible.

"Mais, monsieur," said I, "I would not insult you for the world. I remember too well that you once said we should be friends."

I did not intend my voice to falter, but it did: more, I think, through the agitation of late delight than in any spasm of present fear. Still there certainly was something in M. Paul's anger—a kind of passion of emotion—that specially tended to draw tears. I was not unhappy, nor much afraid, yet I wept.

"Allons, allons!" said he presently, looking round and seeing the deluge universal. "Decidedly I am a monster and a ruffian. I have only one pocket-handkerchief," he added, "but if I had twenty, I would offer you each one. Your teacher shall be your representative. Here, Miss Lucy."

And he took forth and held out to me a clean silk handkerchief. Now a person who did not know M. Paul, who was unused to him and his impulses, would naturally have bungled at this offer—declined accepting the same—etcetera. But I too plainly felt this would never do: the slightest hesitation would have been fatal to the incipient treaty of peace. I rose and met the handkerchief half-way, received it with decorum, wiped therewith my eyes, and, resuming my seat, and retaining the flag of truce in my hand and on my lap, took especial care during the remainder of the lesson to touch neither needle nor thimble, scissors nor muslin. Many a jealous glance did M. Paul cast at these implements; he hated them mortally, considering sewing a source of distraction from the attention due to himself. A very eloquent lesson he gave, and very kind and friendly was he to the close. Ere he had done, the clouds were dispersed and the sun shining out—tears were exchanged for smiles.

In quitting the room he paused once more at my desk.

"And your letter?" said he, this time not quite fiercely.

"I have not yet read it, monsieur."

"Ah! it is too good to read at once; you save it, as, when I was a boy, I used to save a peach whose bloom was very ripe?"

The guess came so near the truth, I could not prevent a suddenly rising warmth in my face from revealing as much.

"You promise yourself a pleasant moment," said he, "in reading that letter; you will open it when alone—n'est ce pas! Ah! a smile answers. Well, well! one should not be too harsh; 'la jeunesse n'a qu'un temps.'"

"Monsieur, monsieur!" I cried, or rather whispered after him, as he turned to go, "do not leave me under a mistake. This is merely a friend's letter. Without reading it, I can vouch for that."

"Je conçois, je conçois: on sait ce que c'est qu'un ami. Bon-jour, mademoiselle!"

"But, monsieur, here is your handkerchief."

"Keep it, keep it, till the letter is read, then bring it me; I shall read the billet's tenor in your eyes."

When he was gone, the pupils having already poured out of the school-room into the berceau, and thence into the garden and court to take their customary recreation before the five o'clock dinner, I stood a moment thinking, and absently twisting the handkerchief round my arm. For some reason —gladdened, I think, by a sudden return of the

golden glimmer of childhood, roused by an unwonted renewal of its buoyancy, made merry by the liberty of the closing hour, and, above all, solaced at heart by the joyous consciousness of that treasure in the case, box, drawer upstairs—I fell to playing with the handkerchief as if it were a ball, casting it into the air and catching it as it fell. The game was stopped by another hand than mine—a hand emerging from a paletôt-sleeve and stretched over my shoulder; it caught the extemporized plaything and bore it away with these sullen words:—

"Je vois bien que vous vous moquez de moi et de mes effets."

Really that little man was dreadful: a mere sprite of caprice and ubiquity: one never knew either his whim or his whereabout.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LETTER.

When all was still in the house; when dinner was over and the noisy recreation hour passed; when darkness had set in, and the quiet lamp of study was lit in the refectory; when the externes were gone home, the clashing door and clamorous bell hushed for the evening; when Madame was safely settled in the salle-à-manger in company with her mother and some friends; I then glided to the kitchen, begged a bougie for one half-hour for a particular occasion, found acceptance of my petition at the hands of my friend Goton, who answered, "Mais certainement, chou-chou, vous en aurez deux si vous voulez." And, light in hand, I mounted noiseless to the dormitory.

Great was my chagrin to find in that apartment a pupil gone to bed indisposed,—greater when I recognized amid the muslin nightcap borders the "figure chiffonée" of Mistress Ginevra Fanshawe; supine at this moment, it is true—but certain to wake and overwhelm me with chatter when the interruption would be least acceptable: indeed, as

I watched her, a slight twinkling of the eyelids warned me that the present appearance of repose might be but a ruse, assumed to cover sly vigilance over "Timon's" movements; she was not to be trusted. And I had so wished to be alone, just to read my precious letter in peace.

Well, I must go to the classes. Having sought and found my prize in its casket, I descended. Ill-luck pursued me. The classes were undergoing sweeping and purification by candle-light, according to hebdomadal custom: benches were piled on desks, the air was dim with dust, damp coffee-grounds (used by Labassecourien housemaids instead of tea-leaves) darkened the floor; all was hopeless confusion. Baffled, but not beaten, I withdrew, bent as resolutely as ever on finding solitude *somewhere*.

Taking a key whereof I knew the repository, I mounted three staircases in succession, reached a dark, narrow, silent landing, opened a worm-eaten door, and dived into the deep, black, cold garret. Here none would follow me—none interrupt—not Madame herself. I shut the garret-door; I placed my light on a doddered and mouldy chest of drawers; I put on a shawl, for the air was ice-cold; I took my letter, trembling with sweet impatience; I broke its seal.

"Will it be long—will it be short?" thought I, passing my hand across my eyes to dissipate the silvery dimness of a suave, south wind shower.

It was long.

"Will it be cool?—will it be kind?"

It was kind.

To my checked, bridled, disciplined expectation, it seemed very kind; to my longing and famished thought it seemed, perhaps, kinder than it was.

So little had I hoped, so much had I feared; there was a fulness of delight in this taste of fruition—such, perhaps, as many a human being passes through life without ever knowing. The poor English teacher in the frosty garret, reading by a dim candle guttering in the wintry air, a letter simply good-natured—nothing more; though that good-nature then seemed to me godlike—was happier than most queens in palaces.

Of course, happiness of such shallow origin could be but brief; yet, while it lasted it was genuine and exquisite: a bubble—but a sweet bubble—of real honey-dew. Dr. John had written to me at length; he had written to me with pleasure; he had written with benignant mood, dwelling with sunny satisfaction on scenes that had passed before his eyes and mine,—on places we had visited together—on conversations we had held—on all the little subject-matter, in short, of the last few halcyon weeks. But the cordial core of the delight was, a conviction the blithe, genial language generously imparted, that it had been poured out not merely to content *me*—but to gratify *himself*. A gratification he might never more desire, never more seek—an

hypothesis in every point of view approaching the certain; but *that* concerned the future. This present moment had no pain, no blot, no want; full, pure, perfect, it deeply blessed me. A passing seraph seemed to have rested beside me, leaned towards my heart, and reposed on its throb a softening, cooling, healing, hallowing wing. Dr. John, you pained me afterwards: forgiven be every ill—freely forgiven—for the sake of that one dear remembered good!

Are there wicked things, not human, which envy human bliss? Are there evil influences haunting the air, and poisoning it for man? What was near me?

Something in that vast solitary garret sounded strangely. Most surely and certainly I heard, as it seemed, a stealthy foot on that floor: a sort of gliding out from the direction of the black recess haunted by the malefactor cloaks. I turned: my light was dim; the room was long—but as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled white.

Say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed; this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN.

I cried out; I sickened. Had the shape approached me I might have swooned. It receded:

I made for the door. How I descended all the stairs I know not. By instinct I shunned the refectory, and shaped my course to Madame's sitting-room : I burst in. I said,—

"There is something in the grenier : I have been there : I saw something. Go and look at it, all of you !"

I said, "All of you ;" for the room seemed to me full of people, though in truth there were but four present : Madame Beck ; her mother, Madame Kint, who was out of health, and now staying with her on a visit ; her brother, M. Victor Kint, and another gentleman : who, when I entered the room, was conversing with the old lady, and had his back towards the door.

My mortal fear and faintness must have made me deadly pale. I felt cold and shaking. They all rose in consternation ; they surrounded me. I urged them to go to the grenier ; the sight of the gentlemen did me good and gave me courage : it seemed as if there were some help and hope, with men at hand. I turned to the door, beckoning them to follow. They wanted to stop me, but I said they must come this way : they must see what I had seen—something strange, standing in the middle of the garret. And, now, I remembered my letter, left on the drawers with the light. This precious letter ! Flesh or spirit must be defied for its sake. I flew upstairs, hastening the faster as I knew I was followed : they were obliged to come.

Lo! when I reached the garret-door, all within was dark as a pit: the light was out. Happily some one—Madame, I think, with her usual calm sense—had brought a lamp from the room; speedily, therefore, as they came up, a ray pierced the opaque blackness. There stood the bougie quenched on the drawers; but where was the letter? And I looked for *that* now, and not for the nun.

"My letter! my letter!" I panted and plained, almost beside myself. I groped on the floor, wringing my hands wildly. Cruel, cruel doom! To have my bit of comfort preternaturally snatched from me, ere I had well tasted its virtue!

I don't know what the others were doing; I could not watch them; they asked me questions I did not answer; they ransacked all corners; they prattled about this and that disarrangement of cloaks, a breach or crack in the skylight—I know not what. "Something or somebody has been here," was sagely averred.

"Oh! they have taken my letter!" cried the grovelling, groping monomaniac.

"What letter, Lucy? My dear girl, what letter?" asked a known voice in my ear. Could I believe that ear? No: and I looked up. Could I trust my eyes? Had I recognized the tone? Did I now look on the face of the writer of that very letter? Was this gentleman near me in this dim garret, John Graham—Dr. Bretton himself?

Yes: it was. He had been called in that very evening to prescribe for some access of illness in old Madame Kint; he was the second gentleman present in the salle-à-manger when I entered.

"Was it *my* letter, Lucy?"

"Your own: yours—the letter you wrote to me, I had come here to read it quietly. I could not find another spot where it was possible to have it to myself. I had saved it all day—never opened it till this evening: it was scarcely glanced over: I *cannot bear* to lose it. Oh, my letter!"

"Hush! don't cry and distress yourself so cruelly. What is it worth? Hush! Come out of this cold room! they are going to send for the police now to examine further: we need not stay here—come, we will go down."

A warm hand, taking my cold fingers, led me down to a room where there was a fire. Dr. John and I sat before the stove. He talked to me and soothed me with unutterable goodness, promising me twenty letters for the one lost. If there are words and wrongs like knives, whose deep-inflicted lacerations never heal—cutting injuries and insults of serrated and poison-dripping edge—so, too, there are consolations of tone too fine for the ear not fondly and for ever to retain their echo: caressing kindnesses—loved, lingered over through a whole life, recalled with unfaded tenderness, and answering the call with undimmed shine, out of that raven cloud foreshadowing Death himself. I have been told

since that Dr. Bretton was not nearly so perfect as I thought him : that his actual character lacked the depth, height, compass, and endurance it possessed in my creed. I don't know, he was as good to me as the well is to the parched wayfarer—as the sun to the shivering jail-bird. I remember him heroic. Heroic at this moment will I hold him to be.

He asked me, smiling, why I cared for his letter so very much? I thought, but did not say, that I prized it like the blood in my veins. I only answered that I had so few letters to care for.

"I am sure you did not read it," said he ; "or you would think nothing of it!"

"I read it, but only once. I want to read it again. I am sorry it is lost." And I could not help weeping afresh.

"Lucy, Lucy, Lucy, my poor little god-sister (if there be such a relationship), here—*here* is your letter. Why is it not better worth such tears, and such tenderly exaggerating faith?"

Curious, characteristic manœuvre! His quick eye had seen the letter on the floor where I sought it ; his hand, as quick, had snatched it up. He had hidden it in his waistcoat-pocket. If my trouble had wrought with a whit less stress and reality, I doubt whether he would ever have acknowledged or restored it. Tears of temperature one degree cooler than those I shed would only have amused Dr. John.

Pleasure at regaining made me forget merited

reproach for the teasing torment ; my joy was great ; it could not be concealed : yet I think it broke out more in countenance than language. I said little.

"Are you satisfied now?" asked Dr. John.

I replied that I was—satisfied and happy.

"Well then," he proceeded, "how do you feel physically? Are you growing calmer? Not much ; for you tremble like a leaf still."

It seemed to me, however, that I was sufficiently calm : at least I felt no longer terrified. I expressed myself composed.

"You are able, consequently, to tell me what you saw? Your account was quite vague, do you know. You looked white as the wall, but you only spoke of 'something,' not defining *what*. Was it a man? Was it an animal? *What* was it?"

"I never will tell exactly what I saw," said I, "unless some one else sees it too, and then I will give corroborative testimony ; but otherwise, I shall be discredited and accused of dreaming."

"Tell me," said Dr. Bretton ; "I will hear it in my professional character : I look on you now from a professional point of view, and I read, perhaps, all you would conceal—in your eye, which is curiously vivid and restless : in your cheek, which the blood has forsaken : in your hand, which you cannot steady. Come, Lucy, speak and tell me."

"You would laugh——?"

"If you don't tell me you shall have no more letters."

"You are laughing now."

"I will again take away that single epistle: being mine, I think I have a right to reclaim it."

I felt raillery in his words: it made me grave and quiet; but I folded up the letter and covered it from sight.

"You may hide it, but I can possess it any moment I choose. You don't know my skill in sleight of hand: I might practise as a conjurer if I liked. Mamma says sometimes, too, that I have an harmonizing property of tongue and eye; but you never saw that in me—did you, Lucy?"

"Indeed—indeed—when you were a mere boy I used to see both: far more then than now—for now you are strong, and strength dispenses with subtlety. But still, Dr. John, you have what they call in this country 'un air fin,' that nobody can mistake. Madame Beck saw it, and——"

"And liked it," said he, laughing, "because she has it herself. But, Lucy, give me that letter—you don't really care for it."

To this provocative speech I made no answer. Graham in mirthful mood must not be humoured too far. Just now there was a new sort of smile playing about his lips—very sweet, but it grieved me somehow—a new sort of light sparkling in his eyes: not hostile, but not reassuring. I rose to go—I bid him good-night a little sadly.

His sensitiveness—that peculiar, apprehensive, detective faculty of his—felt in a moment the

unspoken complaint—the scarce-thought reproach. He asked quietly if I was offended. I shook my head as implying a negative.

"Permit me, then, to speak a little seriously to you before you go. You are in a highly nervous state. I feel sure from what is apparent in your look and manner, however well-controlled, that whilst alone this evening in that dismal, perishing sepulchral garret—that dungeon under the leads, smelling of damp and mould, rank with phthisis and catarrh: a place you never ought to enter—that you saw, or *thought* you saw, some appearance peculiarly calculated to impress the imagination. I know that you *are* not, nor ever were, subject to material terrors, fears of robbers, &c.—I am not so sure that a visitation, bearing a spectral character, would not shake your very mind. Be calm now. This is all a matter of the nerves, I see: but just specify the vision."

"You will tell nobody?"

"Nobody—most certainly. You may trust me as implicitly as you did Père Silas. Indeed, the doctor is perhaps the safer confessor of the two, though he has not grey hair."

"You will not laugh?"

"Perhaps I may, to do you good: but not in scorn. Lucy, I feel as a friend towards you, though your timid nature is slow to trust."

He now looked like a friend: that indescribable smile and sparkle were gone; those formidable

arched curves of lip, nostril, eyebrow, were depressed; repose marked his attitude—attention sobered his aspect. Won to confidence, I told him exactly what I had seen: ere now I had narrated to him the legend of the house—whiling away with that narrative an hour of a certain mild October afternoon, when he and I rode through Bois l'Etang.

He sat and thought, and while he thought we heard them all coming downstairs.

"Are they going to interrupt?" said he, glancing at the door with an annoyed expression.

"They will not come here," I answered: for we were in the little salon where Madame never sat in the evening, and where it was by mere chance that heat was still lingering in the stove. They passed the door and went on to the salle-à-manger.

"Now," he pursued, "they will talk about thieves, burglars, and so on: let them do so—mind you say nothing, and keep your resolution of describing your nun to nobody. She may appear to you again; don't start."

"You think then," I said, with secret horror, "she came out of my brain, and is now gone in there, and may glide out again at an hour and a day when I look not for her?"

"I think it a case of spectral illusion: I fear, following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict."

"Oh, Doctor John—I shudder at the thought of

being liable to such an illusion ! It seemed so real. Is there no cure ?—no preventive ? "

"Happiness is the cure—a cheerful mind the preventive : cultivate both."

No mockery in this world ever sounds to me so hollow as that of being told to *cultivate* happiness. What does such advice mean ? Happiness is not a potato, to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure. Happiness is a glory shining far down upon us out of Heaven. She is a divine dew which the soul, on certain of its summer mornings, feels dropping upon it from the amaranth bloom and golden fruitage of Paradise.

"Cultivate happiness ! " I said briefly to the doctor : "do *you* cultivate happiness ? How do you manage ? "

"I am a cheerful fellow by nature : and then ill-luck has never dogged me. Adversity gave me and my mother one passing scowl and brush, but we defied her, or rather laughed at her, and she went by."

"There is no cultivation in all this."

"I do not give way to melancholy."

"Yes : I have seen you subdued by that feeling."

"About Ginevra Fanshawe—eh ? "

"Did she not sometimes make you miserable ? "

"Pooh ! stuff ! nonsense ! You see I am better now."

If a laughing eye with a lively light, and a face bright with beaming and healthy energy, could attest that he was better, better he certainly was.

"You do not look much amiss, or greatly out of condition," I allowed.

"And why, Lucy, can't you look and feel as I do —buoyant, courageous, and fit to defy all the nuns and flirts in Christendom? I would give gold on the spot just to see you snap your fingers. Try the manœuvre."

"If I were to bring Miss Fanshawe into your presence just now?"

"I vow, Lucy, she would not move me: or, she should move me but by one thing—true, yes, and passionate love. I would accord forgiveness at no less a price."

"Indeed! a smile of hers would have been a fortune to you a while since."

"Transformed, Lucy: transformed! Remember, you once called me a slave! but I am a free man now!"

He stood up: in the port of his head, the carriage of his figure, in his beaming eye and mien, there revealed itself a liberty which was more than ease—a mood which was disdain of his past bondage.

"Miss Fanshawe," he pursued, "has led me through a phase of feeling which is over: I have entered another condition, and am now much disposed to exact love for love—passion for passion —and good measure of it, too."

"Ah, Doctor! Doctor! you said it was your nature to pursue Love under difficulties—to be charmed by a proud insensibility!"

He laughed, and answered, "My nature varies: the mood of one hour is sometimes the mockery of the next. Well, Lucy" (drawing on his gloves), "will the Nun come again to-night, think you?"

"I don't think she will."

"Give her my compliments, if she does—Dr. John's compliments—and entreat her to have the goodness to wait a visit from him. Lucy, was she a pretty nun? Had she a pretty face? You have not told me that yet; and *that* is the really important point."

"She had a white cloth over her face," said I, "but her eyes glittered."

"Confusion to her goblin trappings!" cried he, irreverently: "but at least she had handsome eyes —bright and soft."

"Cold and fixed," was the reply.

"No, no, we'll none of her; she shall not haunt you, Lucy. Give her that shake of the hand, if she comes again. Will she stand *that*, do you think?"

I thought it too kind and cordial for a ghost to stand: and so was the smile which matched it, and accompanied his "Good-night."

* * * * * *

And had there been anything in the garret? What did they discover? I believe, on the closest examination, their discoveries amounted to very little. They talked, at first, of the cloaks being disturbed; but Madame Beck told me afterwards she thought they hung much as usual: and as for

the broken pane in the skylight, she affirmed that aperture was rarely without one or more panes broken or cracked : and besides, a heavy hail-storm had fallen a few days ago. Madame questioned me very closely as to what I had seen, but I only described an obscure figure clothed in black : I took care not to breathe the word "nun," certain that this word would at once suggest to her mind an idea of romance and unreality. She charged me to say nothing on the subject to any servant, pupil, or teacher, and highly commended my discretion in coming to her private salle-à-manger, instead of carrying the tale of horror to the school refectory. Thus the subject dropped. I was left secretly and sadly to wonder, in my own mind, whether that strange thing was of this world, or of a realm beyond the grave ; or whether indeed it was only the child of malady, and I of that malady the prey.

END OF VOL. I.

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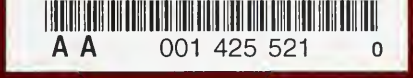
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